

# VILLAGER

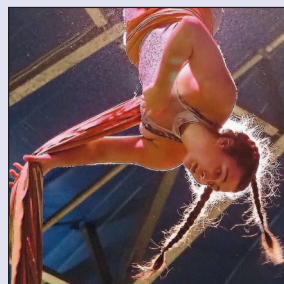
DECEMBER 9-22, 2020

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## Planned apartment at James-Lexington rises to five stories

Some applaud developers' efforts, others question variance requests

By JANE MCCLURE

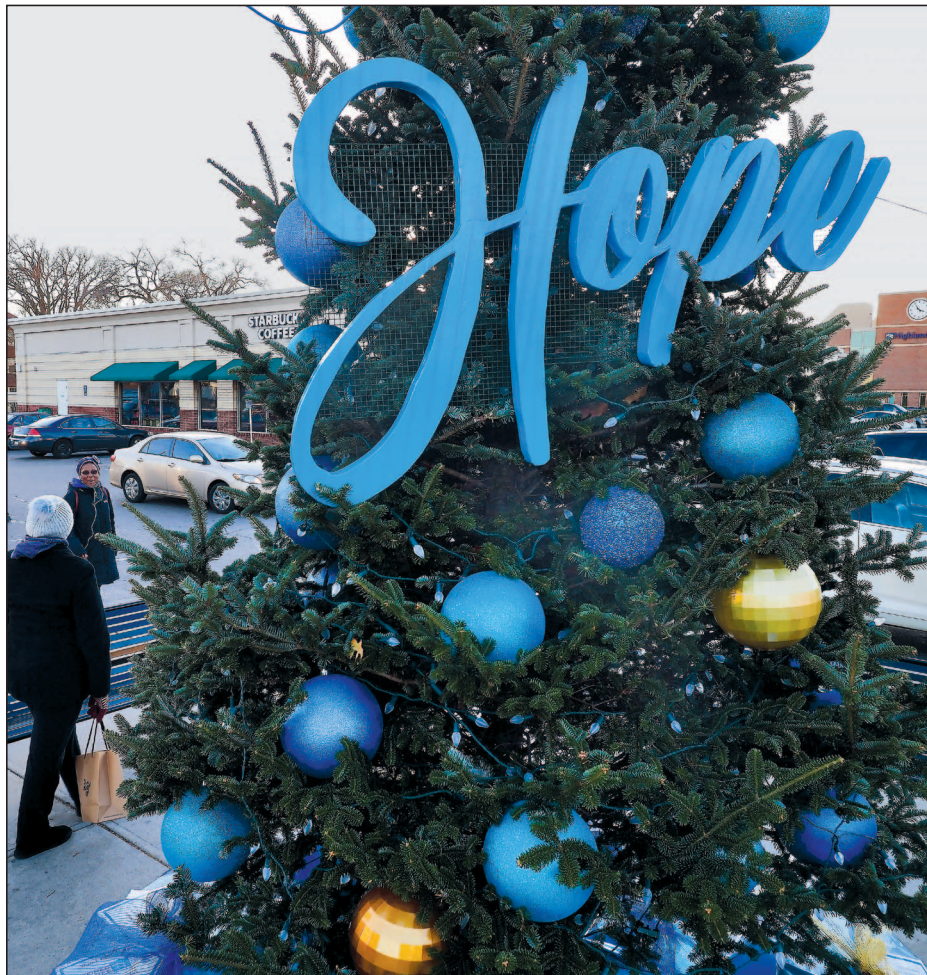
Three variances and a conditional use permit are being sought for a five-story apartment building proposed for the southeast corner of James Avenue and Lexington Parkway. The building would have 93 apartments above two levels of underground parking.

Summit Hill resident and co-developer Chet Funk and architect Eli Zmira of DJR Architecture presented the latest plans to the Macalester-Groveland Community Council's Housing and Land Use Committee on November 25. Preliminary plans presented over the summer called for a three- to four-story building with about 60 units.

Six houses at 1074-1096 James Ave. would be torn down or moved to create an approximately 27,000-square-foot site for the new building, which would have 88 underground parking spaces and nine surface spots. The properties were rezoned earlier this year from single-family to RM2 (residential multifamily). The rezoning took place around the same time that citywide changes to RM zoning were being approved. The changes allow more density on properties zoned for multifamily housing and provide incentives for developers to add affordable housing units.

The James-Lexington property is on a slope and has an irregular shape, with an exit road from I-35E at its east end.

JAMES-LEXINGTON ▶2



**High hopes for the holidays.** The decorated tree at the southwest corner of Cleveland Avenue and Ford Parkway is part of the Highland Business Association's "Celebrate Highland: Holiday of Hope" campaign to encourage shoppers to support local merchants and get into the spirit of the season. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

## Residents weigh in on next phase of Lexington reroute

Work continues on designing connection to Shepard Road

By JANE MCCLURE

The planned extension of South Lexington Parkway to Shepard Road via a rebuilt Elway Street has met a decidedly mixed reaction from local residents. A virtual open house on December 1 drew more than 40 people and many questions about the second phase of the project, which is expected to begin in 2022. Neighbors asked about traffic calming and limits on truck traffic, while bicyclists pushed for better accommodations for them.

The public comment process will continue for several months, with another open house planned for after the holidays. "We have a lot of things to consider in the next phase of work," said Larry

Poppler of the engineering firm TKDA.

TKDA is working with the Ramsey County and Saint Paul departments of public works on the project. Lexington is a county road and Elway is a city street that will be turned over to the county once construction is complete. Design work is underway and will continue into early 2022.

West Seventh/Fort Road Federation and Highland District Council (HDC) representatives expressed support for the project and urged the public to continue to weigh in at future open houses and district council meetings, and through surveys and emails.

Kevin Gallatin, who chairs the HDC's Transportation Committee, said that reconfiguring the dangerous and sometimes confusing Lexington-Montreal-West Seventh intersection has been a goal of the district council for more than two decades. The HDC is also eager to see the extension provide improved bicycle and pedestrian connections to river-

front parks and the Mississippi River.

Federation board president Dana deMaster said her district council is also excited about the potential for the reconfigured intersection and improved bike and pedestrian connections. She said the federation will look at how the design there could inform future work on other angled and multistreet intersections on West Seventh closer to downtown.

The first phase of Lexington Parkway's reconstruction included detaching its connection to Montreal Avenue and curving Lexington through the former Riverside School property where the Lexington Landing senior housing complex is being built. A new section of Adrian Street was constructed on the other side of West Seventh to address traffic issues for businesses and residents in that area.

The new stretch of Lexington has one traffic

LEXINGTON REROUTE ▶2

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**14 JAMES-LEXINGTON**

Funk said those physical challenges and the Planning Commission's request to provide more affordable housing units are driving the requests for the variances and conditional use permit, which will be considered by the commission in the weeks ahead.

"Affordable housing comes with added density or a subsidy of some kind, or some combination of both," Funk said.

While some committee members and neighbors applauded the developers' efforts to add housing density and affordable units that are still being determined, others questioned the need for the variances and permit.

The variance that drew the most scrutiny is for the ratio of a building's total floor area to the land. The maximum floor area ratio in an RM2 district is 2.25, while 2.58 is being sought. Developers can seek a higher ratio with a commitment to provide affordable housing as part of a development.

Minimum 25-foot front- and rear-yard setbacks also are required, while 10 feet are proposed. The height limit in the RM2 district is 50 feet, which would allow five stories. The

building's proposed height is 69½ feet to the top of a roof deck, which requires a conditional use permit.

Housing and Land Use Committee member Marc Manderscheid said the district council supported the change to RM zoning, but he was disappointed with the development team's request to build beyond what that allows.

"You're essentially rezoning through the variance process," Manderscheid said. He added that the developers should have sought denser RM3 zoning in the first place.

Manderscheid and others said the taller building might be more appropriate on the Randolph Avenue side of the block. Others said they would like to see a proposal to develop the entire block bounded by Lexington, James, I-35E and Randolph, instead of a piecemeal approach.

"This seems like too much, too soon," said committee member Gene Johnson.

Some neighbors said the building simply does not fit the area. "It's a square peg in a round hole," said neighbor Alex van Oosterom.

The developers previously discussed plans to construct a second apartment building



A view of the proposed five-story, 93-unit apartment building being proposed for the southeast corner of James Avenue and Lexington Parkway. Six houses on James would be torn down or moved to make way for the development, which would have 88 underground parking spaces on two levels.

on the northeast corner of Lexington and Randolph. Committee members and neighbors urged Funk and his development team to work with the Kipp family, the owners of

those properties. Funk said talks with the Kipps are ongoing, but there is no agreement to develop the entire block at once.



The second phase of construction will extend Lexington Parkway through county right-of-way near the Montreal Hi-Rise and along Elway Street to create a direct link to Shepard Road.

**14 LEXINGTON REROUTE**

lane in each direction, with on-street bike lanes, sidewalks and some parking. Work will continue into the winter, including the activation of new traffic signals at Lexington and West Seventh. Afterward, the signals at Albion and West Seventh will be removed. Other work, including a finishing layer of asphalt and concrete, must wait until spring.

Four possible configurations are on the drawing boards for the second phase of the project, which would extend Lexington through unimproved county right-of-way near the Montreal Hi-Rise and along Elway to create a direct link to Shepard Road. Elway will also be reconfigured and its deteriorated roadway will be resurfaced.

All four concepts have one traffic lane in each direction on Lexington, and three of the four would have on-street bike lanes. What would differ is how bicyclists and pedestrians are accommodated. One idea is for sidewalks on both sides of the street. A second calls for a sidewalk on one side and a shared bike and pedestrian path on the other, as well as on-street bike lanes. A third adds sidewalks on both sides of Lexington, as well as a center median. The fourth option would move bicyclists off of the

street and onto multiuse trails and have a center median.

One complicating factor is the CP Railway bridge over Elway. The railroad there is no longer active and is being eyed for a future bike and pedestrian path or an alternate route for the proposed Riverview Corridor transit project. The bridge piers cannot be moved, which affect street, sidewalk and trail possibilities beneath the bridge.

Another issue is how to reconfigure the intersection of new Lexington/Elway and Montreal. Ideas include a two-way stop, four-way stop, roundabout or traffic signals, though the intersection may not meet standards for the latter.

One major issue for Lexington and Montreal residents is reducing traffic speeds. "So you're basically turning Lexington Parkway into a freeway? Explain how this isn't so," said neighbor Laura Goodman.

Lexington carries about 6,600 vehicles per day north of West Seventh and Elway carries about 5,200 vehicles per day. The new street is expected to bring about 1,000 more vehicles a day on Elway. There are no truck weight limits on Lexington south of Randolph. Elway is a designated truck route as it serves as a connection between Shepard Road and Montreal.




Ramsey County Public Works project manager Nick Fischer said traffic can be slowed through street design and the new intersection's configuration. According to him, by adding bike and pedestrian accommodations people will be encouraged to get out of their vehicles and use other options for travel. However, some neighbors were skeptical.

"It seems like the proposed street connection will function to induce a lot of car traffic between Lexington/West Seventh and Shepard," said local resident Zack Mensinger. "This potentially undermines the goals of making this stretch friendly for people biking and walking to access parks."


Others residents were also concerned about safety. "Your plan will increase traffic to Elway from both Lexington and Montreal, not to mention you'll be drawing more bikers and walkers to the mix," said Leslie Ducloux, who lives at West Seventh and Montreal.

Bicycling advocate Andy Singer asked if Montreal from West Seventh to Elway would be part of the project, and if bike lanes could be striped there or an off-road path built. Fischer said that could be looked at.


For more information and to take a survey that will be posted soon, visit [ramseycounty.us/LexingtonExtension](http://ramseycounty.us/LexingtonExtension).


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# VILLAGER

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The Villager serves the Highland Park, Lexington-Hamline, Macalester-Groveland, Merriam Park, Snelling-Hamline, Summit Hill, Summit-University and West 7th neighborhoods of Saint Paul, along with Lilydale, Mendota and Mendota Heights.

<p><b>Editors</b> Dale Mischke • John Wadell <a href="mailto:news@myvillager.com">news@myvillager.com</a></p> <p><b>Letters to the Editor</b> <a href="mailto:letters@myvillager.com">letters@myvillager.com</a></p> <p><b>Display Advertising Sales</b> Gary Ball <a href="mailto:gball@myvillager.com">gball@myvillager.com</a></p> <p><b>Classified Ads &amp; Legal Notices</b> Jennifer Gordon <a href="mailto:wantads@myvillager.com">wantads@myvillager.com</a></p>	<p><b>Graphic Designers</b> Craig Schuster • Jennifer Gordon</p> <p><b>Administration</b> Jennifer Gordon <a href="mailto:jgordon@myvillager.com">jgordon@myvillager.com</a></p> <p><b>Publisher</b> Michael Mischke <a href="mailto:mmischke@myvillager.com">mmischke@myvillager.com</a></p> <p><b>Subscriptions</b> <a href="mailto:subscriptions@myvillager.com">subscriptions@myvillager.com</a></p>
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**CONTRIBUTORS:** Roger Barr, Matthew Davis, Casey Ek, Janet Lunder Hanafin, Anne Hauth, Brian Johnson, Frank Jossi, Mary Maguire Lerman, Jane McClure, Lou Michaels, Steve Michaels, Anne Murphy, Melenie Soucheray, Brad Stauffer, Jennifer Stewart, Bill Wagner, Carolyn Walkup, Leslie Walters, Dave Wright.

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MORE THAN EVER, YOU NEED TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON

# Debate over police funding dominates city hearing on tax levy

By JANE MCCLURE

Saint Paul Police Department funding was a flash point during the city's 2021 truth-in-taxation hearing on December 2. While only six citizens testified during the virtual program, the City Council received more than 130 public comments via email and voice mail. Many of those comments called for cutting the Police Department's budget and redirecting the money to affordable housing and human services. Other comments called for the city to refrain from cutting the Police Department budget.

The City Council is scheduled to approve the 2021 city budget and property tax levy on December 9. The 2021 tax levy is currently set at a maximum \$165.2 million—the same amount that was levied in 2020—to support a proposed city budget of \$627 million.

Many of those who favor a leaner police budget mentioned the disproportionate impact that law enforcement tactics have had on people of color. They spoke in favor of alternative approaches, including the city's new

Community First Public Safety initiative.

Macalester-Groveland resident Mary Lanham said that while last year's launch of Community First Public Safety is a step in the right direction, more must be done to address police brutality and use of force. "The murder of George Floyd, even after so many reforms to policing in the Twin Cities, shows undeniably that a different kind of change is required to save lives," Lanham said. "A general fund that allocates 32 percent of the city's budget to policing is unacceptable given the urgency of change."

Hamline-Midway resident Laura Jahnig said she is tired of seeing police officers stand by at the governor's mansion while Minnesotans armed with weapons protest the outcome of the presidential election or state restrictions regarding COVID-19. "There's just a never-ending cycle of Saint Paul police brutalizing innocent people and protecting fascists," Jahnig said. "I'm sick of my tax dollars going to support this system. I urge the City Council to reallocate police funds to other needed areas."

"There are homeless people in Saint Paul

who need our help and affordable housing that needs to be created," Jahnig said. "If the rationale behind funding the cops is to keep people safe and decrease crime, then we need to invest in the areas that prevent crime in the first place: adequate housing for all, education and mental health and social services."

"Police don't make me feel safe," said Frogtown resident Joelle Stangler. "They exacerbate problems such as homelessness, they don't solve them."

Many others disagreed, saying that the rising crime rate justifies more funding for the police. "I think it's a fair expectation that we have a safe community supported by a police force that's able to do its work," said East Side resident Edward Xiong. "With the pandemic we've seen even more crime."

"The police, particularly in downtown, have always been kept busy by a steady drip of problems, but this summer crime just exploded," said East Side resident William Miske. "The open drug use and discarded needles are threatening the safety and future of what was once a growing district in Saint

Paul. We've seen restaurants and other businesses leave the area, and more will go if the police aren't able to keep up with the volume of crime. Mayor Carter is wrong to want to cut the Police Department. I know there are tough decisions to make, but public safety and law enforcement are absolutely vital."

"We've seen a huge spike this summer in crime," said East Side resident William Langev. "Cutting the police budget just means that more crimes will go unsolved. It's absolutely crazy, all of the ways the city has found to spend our money on items that don't further public safety in any way."

Under the mayor's proposed budget, public safety spending would be reduced by \$1.2 million, including an \$801,000 cut in the Police Department's budget and a \$431,000 cut in the Fire Department's budget. However, those numbers are likely to change before the City Council finishes its budget deliberations. In fact, the council has already added funding for Community First Public Safety and for a Fire Department wellness coordinator to the 2021 budget as the document nears approval.

# Who's complaining: Ramsey County eyes 0% tax levy increase

By JANE MCCLURE

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners has adopted a maximum property tax levy for 2021 that is no higher than the levy for 2020, though some property owners are still complaining about steep increases in their estimated tax bill for next year.

Speaking at the county's virtual truth-in-taxation hearing on November 30, Jon Reynolds and his wife said the property taxes on their Summit-University fourplex have risen 241 percent over the past five years, including an estimated 18.6 percent increase for 2021.

"Our taxes are almost \$10,000 a year," Reynolds said. "I ask you to look seriously at small landlords. We don't want to see the increased taxes shifted to our tenants."

Melissa Taylor and Kyle Lawson bought their first home in June on Saint Paul's East Side, and they said they were shocked to learn

that their property taxes are going up an estimated 40 percent from 2020 to 2021.

Jim Fox testified that the taxes on his commercial property in Saint Paul are going up an estimated 27 percent next year. "That seems rather enormous," he said.

Despite those concerns, the November 30 tax hearing was relatively amicable compared to past years when dozens of property owners lined up to testify. The County Board had hoped to hold an in-person hearing this fall in downtown Saint Paul, but switched to an online format due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases locally.

"This has been a year like no other," said County Board chair Toni Carter.

Next year is the second year in Ramsey County's two-year budget cycle. The County Board had been considering a 4.5 percent increase in the property tax levy for 2021, but opted for no increase in recognition of the

hardship many families and businesses are facing because of the pandemic and the civil unrest, looting and property damage following George Floyd's death in May, Carter said.

The County Board is scheduled to adopt its 2021 budget and property tax levy on December 15. To hold the line on spending, vacant positions are not being filled, purchases are being delayed, and \$2.8 million is being drawn from budget reserves to cover some one-time expenses, according to commissioner Victoria Reinhardt, who chairs the County Board's Budget Committee.

The challenges of the pandemic are expected to continue well into next year, Reinhardt said. The county will be working to "squeeze every nickel" out of the revenue it has, "but we know these steps aren't sustainable for the long term," she said.

The Ramsey County budget for 2021, which was initially proposed at \$763,123,318, has

been trimmed to \$747,471,298—a 0.9 percent increase over 2020. The proposed property tax levy to support that budget is \$326,073,145, the same amount levied in 2020.

The levy as proposed would make up 43.6 percent of the county's total revenue in 2021. Other funding sources include state and federal programs, local fees and charges, and the reserve fund.

County officials are considering changes in their capital improvement program for 2021, adding \$5.2 million for affordable housing by shifting or dropping other planned spending.

The county has a separate levy for transit operations. The proposed property tax levy for the Regional Rail Authority in 2021 is \$27,570,385—a 0.6 decrease from 2020.

For more information on their tax bill for 2021, property owners may call the County Assessor's office at 651-266-2131.

# Saint Paul approves five-year plan for repairing streets, bridges

By JANE MCCLURE

Saint Paul's decades-long effort to reconstruct its residential streets with new curbs, gutters, sidewalks, streetlights and boulevard trees will continue across the city in 2021-25. The Residential Street Vitality Program (RSVP) got underway in 1995 with a to-do list of 88 projects. Sixty-eight of those projects have been completed in the past 25 years, according to Paul Kurtz, an engineer in the city's Department of Public Works. It is expected to take another 25 years to complete the last 20 projects, he said.

Several local projects are included in the five-year Saint Paul Streets Plan that the City Council reviewed on November 18. Saint Paul Streets is the new name for RSVP. The five-year plan includes city street and bridge reconstruction projects, city and county mill and overlay projects, city sidewalk replacement and state and federally funded road work.

When RSVP began 25 years ago, Saint Paul was able to do three or four street reconstruction projects in a single season. However, costs have risen much faster than city funding. Some projects, like the Griggs-Scheffer project in Highland Park, have been extended over several years. Griggs-Scheffer began this year and is expected to be completed in 2021.

City Council president Amy Brendmoen said that by the time all of the residential streets are reconstructed, the city will have to

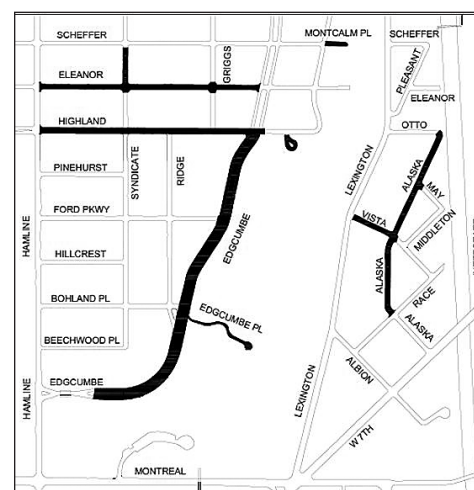
go back and reconstruct the streets that were done in the first years of RSVP. "We're not getting this done," she said.

Saint Paul Streets projects are chosen according to the relative condition of the streets, Kurtz said, and streets are regularly reevaluated to see if they need to be moved up or down on the work schedule. While the city was able to carry over as much as \$1.3 million in funds from 2019 to 2021, that is not enough to fully address the need.

The second phase of the Griggs-Scheffer project, for example, will require \$12.6 million of Saint Paul Streets funding next year. Another \$1.1 million will be spent on downtown pavement and sidewalk improvements, and \$100,000 will go toward the Lexington Parkway-Montreal Avenue-West Seventh Street reconfiguration that began this year. That project is also slated to receive \$1 million in Municipal-State Aid (MSA) funds in 2021 and \$2.5 million in 2022.

Two other Saint Paul Streets projects scheduled for 2022 are the reconstruction of Edgumbe Road between Fairview and Saint Paul avenues at a cost of \$6.65 million and Summit Hill alley improvements totaling \$600,000.

Summit Avenue between Victoria Street and Lexington Parkway will be reconstructed in 2023 at a cost of \$6.64 million. Summit between Hamline Avenue and Mississippi River Boulevard is among several local streets slated for mill and overlay work in 2023-25. The reconstruction of Pleasant Avenue between Vic-



Phase II of the Griggs-Scheffer street reconstruction project in the summer of 2021 will redo the rights-of-way that appear in black above.

toria Street and Saint Clair Avenue is penciled in for \$4.28 million in 2025.

Another big street project coming up is the reconstruction of Grand Avenue between Snelling and Fairview avenues, with \$800,000 in design work in 2023 and \$6.69 million for construction in 2024. That project will be paid for with MSA funds.

Local residents who have endured a year of detours during the recent reconstruction of Highway 5 near Fort Snelling will get a respite before the Minnesota Department of Transportation reconstructs West Seventh Street between Munster and Saint Clair avenues in

2025 at a cost of \$1.75 million.

Some upcoming Saint Paul Streets projects will be funded through the city's Capital Improvement Budget (CIB), including future traffic improvements around the Highland Bridge development (\$1.3 million in 2022), a noise wall along I-94 between Fairview and Prior avenues (\$100,000 in 2022), a Walnut Street steps retaining wall (\$2.5 million in 2023), and a Grand Hill retaining wall near I-35E (\$1 million in 2024 and \$500,000 in 2025).

Some projects draw on multiple sources of funding. Reconstruction of the eastbound Kellogg Boulevard bridge by RiverCentre is set for \$1.5 million in CIB funding and \$2.71 million in MSA funding in 2021. Work on the Shepard Road bridge near Otto Avenue is slated for \$500,000 in MSA funds and \$500,000 in federal funds in 2023. Work on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Randolph Avenue retaining walls, a roadway approach and a bridge over the Union Pacific railroad tracks near the Mississippi River is slated for \$2 million in CIB funds in 2021, \$225,000 in CIB funds in 2022 and another \$2.4 million in federal funds in 2022.

Local streets slated for city or county mill and overlay projects in 2021 include Hamline Avenue between Randolph and Highland Parkway, Jefferson Avenue between West Seventh and Victoria streets, and Saint Paul Avenue between Edgumbe Road and West Seventh.

# Growing hunger has strained resources of area food shelves

## The need is up from 65-93% since the pandemic began

BY CAROLYN WALKUP

Hunger is on the rise in Minnesota and so too are the opportunities for people of good will to help alleviate that hunger. One in five children in Minnesota is suffering from food insecurity. That is up from one in eight children before the COVID-19 pandemic began, according to Second Harvest Heartland, the agency that stocks food shelves in Minnesota and western Wisconsin.

Second Harvest is calling this year's demand for emergency food assistance the highest the U.S. has seen since the Great Depression. "COVID has undone more than a decade's worth of progress in reducing Minnesota's food insecurity rate," said Second Harvest Heartland CEO Allison O'Toole. "More people than ever are facing hunger today, and the hardships will only intensify as winter sets in and grocery budgets take a back seat to non-negotiable expenses like heat, medication and internet service for distance learning."

More than 1 million Minnesotans have applied for state unemployment benefits since March. However, the federal stimulus payments of last spring are a distant memory, and the relief offered by such pub-

lic programs as Pandemic-EBT are about to run out along with the government moratoriums on tenant evictions and home foreclosures.

The growing need has strained the resources of food shelves in neighborhoods served by the Villager. The food shelf at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center in Summit-University has seen its base of regular patrons increase by more than 5,000 since March. Keystone Community Services recorded a 93 percent increase in food distributed from its shelves in Saint Paul's Merriam Park and North End neighborhoods from September 2019 to September 2020. Neighborhood House has seen a 65 percent increase in the number of patrons served at its Francis Basket food shelf in Highland Park.

The three food shelves have had to change the way they distribute food since the pandemic began. Patrons now pick up their orders curbside or have them delivered to their home instead of selecting the food off the shelves themselves.

Keystone, in addition to offering curbside pickup at its food shelves at 1916 University Ave. and 1459 Rice St., operates a Foodmobile with stops at such locations as the University of Saint Thomas, the University of Minnesota's Saint Paul cam-



Volunteer Judy-Ann Ehrlich hands Saint Paul College student John Yang a bag of groceries from the Keystone Community Services Foodmobile during its monthly stop on December 2 in the parking lot west of the school. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

pus, Saint Paul College and Central Towers in downtown.

New this year is delivery to the homebound, to mostly elderly people, through Keystone's partnerships with Metro Mobility and Transit Link. Keystone is planning to shift that program to volunteer-based deliveries in January. Twenty-four volunteers will be needed each week, according to president and CEO Mary McKeown.

In addition to these food programs, Keystone conducted several drive-through distribution events through the USDA's new COVID Food Assistance Program (CFAP). That federal program included fresh food from farmers who had lost their restaurant customers to the state shutdown. Keystone's own surveys have indicated that close to 60 percent of the 32,900 people who benefited from the program were new to seeking food support this year.

Keystone's plan is to continue serving those CFAP clients, many of whom have lost their jobs and expect to be out of work for a long time, McKeown said. However, she is concerned that the program may not be renewed next year.

Hallie Q. Brown distributed 53,400 pounds of food to more than 1,500 individuals in October, in addition to 8,000 pounds at local school sites and 3,000 pounds at local churches, according to executive director Jonathan Palmer. "As long as there's a need, we'll accept new clients," he said. Community center staff are now handling the packing of food boxes, which are

*The food shelf at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center in Summit-University has seen its base of regular patrons increase by more than 5,000 since March.*

customized for special dietary and cultural needs. "We lost 90 percent of our volunteers (since the COVID outbreak)," Palmer said. "They were mostly seniors who are vulnerable (to infection)."

Hallie Q. Brown gets its food through Second Harvest and the Food Group as well as partnerships with Hy-Vee, Cub Foods and Mississippi Market. The food markets donate perishable food they have been unable to sell.

Food donations are always welcome at Neighborhood House's Francis Basket food shelf at 1293 E. Maynard Drive, according to Sarah Berger, director of resource development, although monetary donations are preferred. "We try to make sure that anyone in Saint Paul who needs food gets it," she said, "and we can make a dollar go farther than people who donate food they purchase at the grocery store."

The three local food shelves also welcome new volunteers. For information on how you can help, contact Hallie Q. Brown at hallieq-

brown.org or 651-224-4601; Keystone at keystonecommunityservices.org or 651-645-0349; or Francis Basket at neighb.org or 651-789-2500.

The Saint Paul Public Schools continues to distribute food during school vacations and while its schools are closed for distance learning. The district has distributed 13 million meals since mid-March. Saint Paul families with school-age children are eligible for the free meal boxes, which they can pick up at five different high schools or have delivered by school bus.

Free food is also distributed by smaller programs in the area, including Palace Community Center at 781 Palace Ave. from 2-4 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays; Dunning Recreation Center at 1221 Marshall Ave. from 2-4 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays; the Department of Indian Work at 1671 Summit Ave. (contact interfaithaction.org or call 651-789-3849); and the Miniharvest monthly produce distribution (next scheduled from 7:30-10 a.m. Saturday, December 19) at Minnehaha United Methodist Church, 3701 E. 50th St. in Minneapolis.

Free packaged meals and lunch bags are also available at select times at the Midway YMCA at 1761 University Ave. and the Salvation Army at 401 W. Seventh St.

People who would like to help the hungry this holiday season can feed twice as many people by donating money to Second Harvest Heartland. Second Harvest will match all monetary donations received between now and December 31. For information, visit 2harvest.org.



Keystone Foodmobile manager Eleanor Heberlein (right) signs in patrons as they line up for their grocery order in the parking lot of Saint Paul College.

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# City denies appeal of proposed five-story building on Grand Ave.

By JANE McCLURE

An appeal of the site plan for a proposed five-story apartment building at 1769 Grand Ave. was denied on December 4 by the Saint Paul Planning Commission. The appeal had been filed by 14 neighbors of the development, a 12-unit building that would replace a century-old duplex on the 50-by-201-foot lot.

"This development is a dramatic departure from the historic use of the property," said Ann Steingraeber, an attorney for the neighbors. She and the neighbors asked that the developers—Lucas Wiborg and his group Good Timing LLC—set aside the current plan and work with local residents on a smaller building.

The building's 12 apartments would be large with a total of 43 bedrooms. According to Summit Avenue resident Anne Geisser, the building is inconsistent with the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood plan and the city's comprehensive plan. Those plans call for taller buildings to be at corners and not mid-block as the Good Timing project is.

Geisser said the developer did not meet with neighbors before submitting plans for the building to the city. "We always felt we could compromise on a plan," she said.

Wiborg said he did reach out to neighbors about the project. He also said the new apartments will help meet a strong demand for homes of that type in the Macalester-Groveland neighborhood.

"This is a housing type that is sorely needed," Wiborg said. According to him, neighbors are unfairly criticizing the project.

Last April the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) denied three variances for the project—for minimum lot size, side-yard setback and parking. However, the developer appealed to the City Council, which overturned the BZA ruling.

City staff approved the site plan for the apartment building earlier this year, and the Planning Commission's Zoning Committee recommended that the appeal be denied on November 19.

The site is appropriately zoned for medium-density multifamily housing. The building will have 12 three- and four-bedroom units.

Several floor plans are being offered, but most of the apartments are multilevel in design. Monthly rents range from \$2,500 to \$3,400.

The neighbors are concerned about the visual impact a five-story building would have on the Summit Avenue West Historic Preservation District. Privacy is another concern. "The building will tower over the houses on our block," said Summit Avenue resident Deb Ashland.

Neighbors are also concerned about the potential for additional alley traffic and on-street parking congestion. Twelve off-street parking spaces are planned, or seven fewer than the 19 spaces required without a parking variance.

The Planning Commission received three letters from Summit Avenue neighbors supporting the appeal and three letters supporting the project. The Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association supported the appeal and sent a letter raising concerns about the project. The Macalester-Groveland Community Council sent a letter reiterating its past support for the project's variances, though it did not take a formal position on the appeal.



The Grand Avenue facade of the five-story apartment building planned for the 50-foot-wide lot at 1769 Grand Ave.



The front elevation (facing Summit Avenue) of the proposed three-unit townhouse at 540-542 Portland Ave.

## HPC sets new hearing on Portland Ave. townhouse

By JANE McCLURE

A dispute over whether a proposed three-unit townhouse at 540-542 Portland Ave. would fit in the Historic Hill District will return to the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) for another public hearing on December 14.

The HPC approved building plans and the city's Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) approved six variances for the project in

October. The City Council was set to hear appeals of both of those approvals on December 2, but laid the matter over until December 16.

The appeals were filed by William Garman "Gar" Hargens and Mary Staples Thompson of 548 Portland Ave. Hargens is a former chair of the HPC.

Hargens and Thompson said they and other neighbors did not receive notice of the online HPC hearing, which was held at the same time as the one for the BZA. They

contend that their testimony was excluded from the HPC hearing, which prompted the commission to hold the hearing again.

The appellants also argue that the variances for setbacks, lot size and parking do not meet required standards, such as demonstrating that there are practical difficulties of developing the property and the use will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.

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# News Briefs

## Three-story apartment building planned for 2132 Grand Avenue

Jerome Exley owns a duplex at 2132 Grand Ave. He and his family lived in one of the units from 2008-12 and watched as five- and four-story apartment buildings were constructed on the lots on either side of them. While he and his wife had hoped to move back to the duplex as empty-nesters, “we’ve just kind of been left in the dust with development on both sides,” Exley said. So now they want to tear down the duplex and build a three-story apartment building in its place.

The Exleys received the green light for the seven-unit building on November 30 when the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals approved a 2-foot setback variance for the surface parking lot they are planning off the alley in back. The zoning code requires off-street parking to be a minimum of 4 feet from any property line. A setback of 1.9 feet is proposed from the east property line.

The apartment building will be just over 30 feet high—well under the maximum 40-foot height limit in that area. The property is zoned for multifamily use, so no zoning change is needed.

The Macalester-Groveland Community Council Housing and Land Use Committee had recommended approval of the variance.

## Redesigned Dale Street bridge over I-94 reopens to traffic

After nine months of detours, the Dale Street bridge over I-94 reopened to traffic in late November with wider sidewalks, improved bicycle connections and public artwork that proclaims “We are Rondo” in 12 different languages.

The artwork pays tribute to the surrounding neighborhood’s history as the city’s predominantly African-American neighborhood and celebrates its diverse population today.

The Dale Street bridge continues to provide two lanes of motorized traffic in each direction. However, turn lanes have been added to improve traffic flow. The bridge work continues this month with the installation of new lighting, so travelers can expect short-term closures. The final details of the project will be completed next summer, including the reconstruction of Dale Street between Iglehart and Concordia avenues.

The \$14.7 million project was a collaborative effort by the Ramsey County Department of Public Works, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Saint Paul Department of Public Works.

## City Council orders demolition of home at 1904 Princeton Ave.

A house in Macalester-Groveland that has been on the city’s vacant properties list since 2007 must be torn down within 15 days due to its poor condition. The Saint Paul City Council voted 7-0 on December 2 to order the removal of the 1,230-square-foot home at 1904 Princeton Ave. with no option for repair.

Owners John Kattar and Mary Jo Durand have continued to pay property taxes and

vacant building fees on the 1922 house. However, its chimney and foundation are in a deteriorated condition, as are interior and exterior walls and the detached garage in back.

The couple’s attorney, Steve Anderson, said that while the couple have made progress in clearing out the house and addressing some of the structural problems, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed work. Anderson asked that they be given more time to clean out the house. They have received offers to purchase the house, he said.

Ward 3 City Council member Chris Tolbert said that the problem had gone on for long enough. The house has been vacant longer than he has been on the City Council, he noted.

## HPC approves new single-family home for vacant Summit Ave. lot

The second time was the charm for developer David Hovda. His plans for a new single-family home on a vacant lot at 1498 Summit Ave. were approved by the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission on November 16.

The HPC had rejected his previous plans in April, citing a lack of information on the building’s height and on how the house would relate to neighboring structures in the Summit Avenue West Historic Preservation District.

Hovda changed the height of the house and the pitch of the roof in response to the HPC’s concerns. He is now planning to build a two-story house with fiber cement lap siding, an architectural asphalt shingle roof and a metal roof above the front porch. A detached garage will be built in back with access from the alley.

The house will occupy a 490-square-foot lot, which is a typical size for many Saint Paul neighborhoods but relatively small for Summit Avenue. The house will be situated so that its front lines up with other homes on the block.

## Mendota Heights City Council seat to be filled by appointment

The Mendota Heights City Council will interview candidates for a vacancy on the City Council during a work session scheduled for 5 p.m. Monday, December 14, at a location still to be determined.

The vacancy was created by the November 12 resignation of Liz Petschel. Applications from prospective council members were accepted until November 30. The City Council and mayor-elect Stephanie Levine were scheduled to review the applications on December 8, after this issue of the *Villager* went to press.

The City Council is expected to appoint the interim council member later this month to serve in that role until Mendota Heights’ next general election on November 8, 2022, when voters will choose a council member to serve the remainder of the open term plus an additional four years.

For more information, call 651-452-1850 or visit mendota-heights.com.

*News Briefs were compiled by Jane McClure and Dale Mischke.*

## 64 PORTLAND TOWNHOUSE

Several other neighbors also oppose the project, as does the Ramsey Hill Association and the Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association. They contend the townhouse would be too large for the site and would be an “odd duck” in the neighborhood.

Developer Sullivan Property Investments II has received several letters of support from other neighbors and the backing of the Summit-University Planning Council. The company contends that the project will provide a needed housing option, and that its design is

consistent with existing historic guidelines.

The new townhouse would be built on the rear of a lot that already has a three-unit townhouse fronting Portland. The front entrance of the new building would face Summit Avenue. It would be similar in design to the existing Dutch Colonial building.

Architect Carlos Perez said the development team met twice with neighbors to discuss the project.

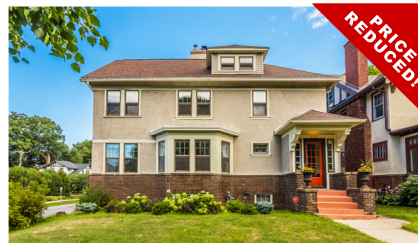
“We believe we have a plan that fits very well into the neighborhood,” Perez said, adding that the project would be a major improvement to what is now a vacant lot.

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# VIEWPOINT

## Times change and so must the plan for transit along West 7th

By JEROME JOHNSON

The decision by the Metropolitan Council and Ramsey County to select the “modern streetcar” as the “locally preferred alternative” for transit along West Seventh Street between downtown Saint Paul and Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport (MSP) is now proceeding to a second phase (*Villager*, November 11). It should instead be proceeding to a complete re-examination of that decision.

The modern streetcar never really made sense for the Riverview Corridor. It is too slow, too costly, too disruptive and runs within a suboptimal route structure.

Too slow? It will take five minutes longer to ride a modern streetcar between Union Depot and MSP than riding Metro Transit’s No. 54 bus today. All for \$2 billion. Too disruptive? Imagine West Seventh rendered nearly impassable for three years of construction and then consider one streetcar-involved collision every 40 or so days — the standard accident rate now plaguing similar U.S. transit networks. Suboptimal route? Where else would you be able to go on a modern streetcar where you cannot go now by bus?

The modern streetcar makes even less sense today. The civil unrest that sent our community reeling earlier this year is forcing a renewed focus on the social and economic needs of the marginalized, the disadvantaged, the transit-dependent and our essential workforce. Those needs include access to more job opportunities within a reasonable commute time, getting to and from work and school more consistently on time, and enhanced comfort and safety on vehicles and at stations. The modern streetcar, on the other hand, caters to the needs of downtown convention-goers, lunchtime office workers and out-of-town hockey fans and concert-goers.

The COVID-19 pandemic, with or without a vaccine, is also changing the way we go about our business, if not the way we party. Future commuting patterns will feature longer and more frequent two-way trips throughout the day as the traditional 9-to-5 commutes decline, office buildings and hotels convert to apartment buildings, and in-town retail outlets give way to outlying big-box fulfillment centers. Commuters will be working in places like Eden Prairie, Hopkins, Brooklyn Park and the Ford site rather than in

downtown Saint Paul.

In tomorrow’s world, it will be just as important to get through downtown efficiently as it is to go downtown today. Transportation networks that feature higher-speed, unimpaired trunk lines with seamless, efficient transfer points, safe and walkable transit stations and creative first- and last-mile options will be the order of the day. There is nothing about the \$2 billion Riverview Corridor streetcar that fits this model.

A post-pandemic, post-civil unrest re-examination of the streetcar alternative needs to occur, one that addresses the following:

- How the Riverview Corridor transit network can be reimaged so that commuters can safely access at least 30 percent more job opportunities within the standard 45-minute commute window. The modern streetcar is at least 10 mph too slow for this.

- How West Seventh transit fits within a broader surface transportation plan that includes a repurposed and traffic-calmed Shepard Road, the recreational and social objectives of the Great River Passage

initiative and the now-idle Canadian Pacific Railway spur. Put another way, does it really make sense to downsize Shepard Road and constrict capacity on West Seventh with streetcar operations?

- How the post-pandemic transit needs of the nearby Ford site are to be met. It is slated to become one of the densest urban mixed-use developments in the nation and yet there is no explicit mobility and transit equity plan. Why?

- How and where post-pandemic, transit-oriented development can work for all corridor stakeholders.

Times change, and the Riverview Corridor-West Seventh Street transit selection process needs to change as well.

The pandemic, for all its carnage, has given us an additional year or two to take a collective breath, decide what really matters and then remake our critical transit infrastructure to fit that reality. It has become increasingly difficult to see a modern streetcar as part of that new reality.

*Jerome Johnson is a retired transportation economist and a resident of the Summit Hill neighborhood.*

## INBOX

### A new Thanksgiving tradition

For the last 50-plus years I have been the official Thanksgiving dinner host for our extended family. I cleaned, shopped, chopped, prepped, cooked and baked for four days. This year there was no gathering. We ordered our Thanksgiving meal as takeout from Highland Cafe in the Highland Shopping Center. Our local family members did the same. The meals were fabulous. Every dish I usually made was there and a big choice of pies as well. A new tradition is born.

*Kathryn Bennett  
Highland Park*

### Only fools rush in

It seems almost every proposed construction project involves a variance request, if not two or three. Remember, we don’t have to say “yes” to the first person who asks us to dance.

Please hesitate before approving yet another height variance at 485 S. Snelling Ave. (southwest corner of Snelling and Randolph avenues). Also, think hard about the description of the first floor of the proposed building: parking, rental office, fitness center. No retail? There are building designs that can enhance rather than detract from that corner. Highland Park and Macalester-Groveland should stand up and demand a better design that can still be profitable to the builder.

I will miss the gas station at Snelling and Randolph. It offers free tire air, specialized fuel for small engines, and competition for Speedway and BP. And you can see the sky above the station. Thank you for that.

*Kristen O’Brien  
Highland Park*

### Cut the city budget with care

Saint Paul Mayor Melvin Carter’s city budget for 2021 must cut his number of cabinet members down to seven members. With seven City Council members, he should be able to get along with seven cabinet members.

The city’s Public Works budget must receive adequate funds for the safety of vehicles and pedestrians, including winter plowing, salting and sanding streets and such summer street maintenance repairs as pothole patching and street sweeping. The Police Department budget must receive adequate funds for the safety of the people and their property. The Fire Department budget must receive adequate funds in order for emergency responders to get to a burning issue in a timely manner.

The Saint Paul Public Library’s deepest projected budget

cuts must be restored due to increasing unemployment from COVID-19. With thousands of Saint Paul residents unemployed, many have likely needed to disconnect their internet service, including parents of school-age children now unable to do distance learning.

The city’s Parks and Recreation budget must be adequately funded to continue with emerald ash borer tree removals and replacements and provide places to exercise. Community centers have exercise equipment in their buildings that need to be used. We’re all less active when orders are given to stay home. More people have gained weight, and obesity is now a health pandemic.

Hopefully, the mayor and City Council will seriously rethink their proposed budget cuts to the departments of Public Works, Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation and Public Library for the benefit of citizens.

*Sue Shetka  
Macalester-Groveland*

### A note to MH’s new mayor

Congratulations to Stephanie Levine on her election as mayor of Mendota Heights.

Levine promised that as mayor she will be visible and accessible. Yet within two weeks of her election, she asked the City Council to delay her swearing in because she would be on vacation.

During her campaign, she identified priorities to plan, preserve, protect and promote Mendota Heights. She also targeted a need for a healthy environment, sustainability and revenue for the city. Every one of these issues is already identified in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the city. This raises the question as to whether her priorities differ in any significant way from those already built into the planning process for the next two decades.

As a member of the District 197 School Board, Levine supported a series of decisions contrary to the best interests of Mendota Heights residents. In particular, she endorsed siting the new Sibley High School stadium immediately adjacent to the residents north of Warrior Drive. When the stadium was in use, she inappropriately insisted that stadium users have the right to park on Warrior Drive even though there was plenty of parking on school property. Noise pollution from the new stadium will compromise the quality of life of Warrior Drive residents for the indefinite future. And despite the pandemic, Levine supported sending staff and students back into enclosed school environments while convening virtual meetings of the School Board.

It strikes me as hypocrisy for Levine to invoke the above values to defend decisions that undermine the interests of residents and then have us believe that she will rely on the same values to provide inspirational leadership as mayor in

defense of these same interests.

Mendota Heights stands alone among first-tier Twin Cities suburbs in that it is primarily residential and largely built out with low density and limited commercial development. In her campaign literature, Levine rightly refers to the city’s unique character. Here are some policies I suggest she support to sustain the city’s character: 1) oppose high-density residential projects, 2) do not pander to developers, 3) variance applications merit skepticism, 4) fiercely defend our lot-size ordinance, and 5) nurture our Southwest Business Park since its commercial success is vital to our city.

*Thomas Smith  
Mendota Heights*

### Brazen machinations

If President Trump manages to wheedle a second term in office by overturning the legal election, I cannot help mentally channeling the alternative reality in the second installment of the *Back to the Future* trilogy when Bif is in charge.

*Mary Therese Nelson  
Highland Park*

### A welcome rant

I think it’s pretty fair to say that 2020 has been a rough year for us *Villager* readers. Between COVID-19, the lockdowns and grueling economic conditions, 2020 has been a year with few notable highlights.

So it was with much delight that I opened up to the monthly Kathleen Deming rant to discover that she was once again complaining about organized trash collection (*Villager* Inbox, November 25). It brought me back to the halcyon days of yesteryear when the residents of this great city ignored such rabble-raising and voted overwhelmingly in favor of city-run garbage collection.

Thank you, Kathleen, for bringing a singular tear of joy to this wizened face. May next year bring better times for all.

*April King  
Snelling-Hamline*

**The Villager welcomes letters to the editor and longer guest editorials. To be considered for publication, all commentary must be signed, indicate the neighborhood in which the writer lives and provide a phone number for verification purposes. You may your send your commentary to the Villager, 757 S. Snelling Ave., Saint Paul, MN 55116; email it to letters@myvillager.com; or submit it via our website at myvillager.com/editorial.**



# Council hears appeal to raze Dale St. garage

## Decision laid over to give SUPC time to consider issue

By JANE McCLURE

Agreeing that more public comments are needed, the Saint Paul City Council on December 2 laid over an appeal from developers to demolish a former auto repair garage at 156 N. Dale St. to make way for a new apartment building. The council is expected to take up the appeal again on January 27.

The Summit-University Planning Council (SUPC) asked for more time to weigh in on the matter, said Ward 1 City Council member Dai Thao. The delay is meant to coincide with the SUPC's next meeting on January 26. Executive director Jens Werner said the district council was not aware of the appeal until it appeared on the City Council agenda.

The former auto repair garage's fate has been debated for months. It is part of an L-shaped parcel near Selby Avenue and Dale Street that is being eyed for a new four-story apartment building.

The Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) voted in October to reject a request from TJL Development and Chase Real Estate group to demolish the one-story brick garage. A similar request was also denied in March. The HPC is involved because the building is in the Historic Hill District.

In his appeal, Jim LaValle of TJL noted the extensive renovations the garage has undergone since it was built in 1915. The building was modified in 1926 with the addition of a brick storefront. It served as an auto repair shop for many years, but has been vacant for a decade. Its windows have been boarded up and LaValle said the structure is in a deteriorated condition.

"The building does not have any remaining historic character, materials, features or spaces that merit or conform with historical status," LaValle said.

He noted that if he is allowed to redevelop the Dale Street property, the new building would match the auto garage setback. He pointed out that renovating



Jim LaValle of TJL Development wants to replace the one-story brick garage at 156 N. Dale St. with a four-story addition (shown here) to his planned Selby-Dale apartment building.

*"The building does not have any remaining historic character, materials, features or spaces that merit or conform with historical status," LaValle said.*

the former garage would cost an estimated \$1.6 million.

The city received one letter from neighbors in opposition to the demolition request and one in favor. Patrick Rhone and Bethany Gladhill said the garage building tells the story of everyday people of Saint Paul and is worth saving. Katie Kraft called the garage a "vacant, blighted eyesore" and said it should come down.

Allison Suhan Eggers, senior heritage presentation planner for the city, said LaValle would have to follow a process to document the garage and its history if the City Council opts for demolition. She said LaValle would also need HPC approval if the garage is demolished and new plans for the property are developed. Changes would also possibly have to go back to the Planning Commission or Board of Zoning Appeals if

variances are needed.

The developers originally proposed to construct an apartment building on vacant lots at 594 Selby and on the garage site. When the first demolition permit request was denied, the plans were changed to build the apartment on Selby only and to remodel the garage. That project—a five-story apartment building with around 80 units—was approved by the HPC and Planning Commission earlier this year.

However, the deteriorated condition of the garage prompted the developers to seek a demolition permit and to expand to the Dale Street parcel. Preliminary plans reported in October called for reducing the Selby portion of the building to four stories and constructing a four-story addition facing Dale for a total of around 105-110 apartments.

City Council members Amy Brendmoen and Mitra Jalali praised the proposed redevelopment. "I'm excited about a four-story project in a very vibrant area," Brendmoen said.

Jalali cited the layers of hurdles that can be created for developers in historic districts and said housing would be a "much better use of the site." While agreeing to Thao's request for a layover, Jalali said she was ready to support the appeal.

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# Neighbors lift Macalester's spirits with 150 holiday gift bags

## Their generosity was inspired by students' efforts to control the spread of coronavirus

By Frank Jossi

Inspired by the way Macalester College has embraced the safety protocols of the COVID-19 pandemic, Highland Park resident Bridget Faricy put together gift bags for the many Mac students who will remain on or near campus through the holiday season.

Faricy, a wholesale distributor of knitwear, had a back load of unsold merchandise after months of canceled markets and other boutique events. Without customers to serve or markets to attend, she had a yen for helping people through the pandemic.

Early in the pandemic, Faricy noticed Macalester students wearing masks and maintaining a safe social distance. She called the college and learned that about 150 students would be staying in the area over the long winter break rather than returning home.

"Macalester students are super-mindful of the COVID precautions," Faricy said. "With the winter coming, I had thousands of pieces of knitwear left and I wanted to give it away to people who would welcome it."

Macalester has done an impressive job of limiting the spread of the coronavirus. According to the college's COVID dashboard, during the week of November 24-30 Mac experienced just four positive results out of 174 students tested. With an enrollment of 2,049, the college had a total of just 46 coronavirus cases between August 26 and December 2. As of late November, Macalester's test positiv-



Duane Nyugen (second from left) and three other Macalester College students who declined to give their names received the gifts donated by neighbors as comfort to those students who will not be going home for the holidays during the winter break. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

ity rate stood at 2.3 percent, compared to the state average of 10.2 percent.

Faricy enlisted several friends in her gift bag project. Amy Wescott mixed 35 pounds of caramel to produce 650 pieces of the confection. Local fashion designer Laura Hlavac donated masks for the gift bags. Artist Amy Fyle chipped in candles. Another local woman, Susan Duffy, added neck gaiters. A GoFundMe campaign raised \$670, enough to buy 50 gift cards from TeaSource in Highland Village and 17 more from Roots Roasting on Saint Clair

Avenue.

Contributing to the gift bags was a chance "to give back to the community," Wescott said. "Bridget's initiative was a good one in recognizing the students for everything they were doing to prevent the spread of COVID."

Macalester's student government distributed the gift bags to the students, many of whom are from other countries or distant states. A representative of the student government, who wished to remain anonymous, was moved by the neighbors' gesture. "I thought it was amazingly generous," she said. "It was totally unexpected, and everyone was so grateful. It lifted a lot of spirits. It was nice to see students smile about something, because it's been a really gloomy semester."

Macalester biology professor Paul Overvoorde, co-chair of the college's Infectious Disease Task Force and a special adviser on COVID to Macalester president Suzanne Rivera, offered a note of caution. Though the case numbers have remained low, he said, "the reality is that things can change quickly." The college remains vigilant, he said, with a coordinated response across all departments and disciplines and strong communications.

The Macalester community has embraced the need for masks, social distancing and

remote learning, according to Overvoorde. "We've been fortunate that our students and staff are responding in ways that enable us to get through it," he said.

It is primarily first-year students who are living on campus this fall and attending the few in-person classes or meetings being held at Macalester. The students live alone in their dorm rooms, a strategy that has allowed those who need to quarantine to stay put. The college also provides isolation rooms for those who contract COVID.

Macalester divided its first semester into two 7½-week modules. Full-time students are enrolled in two courses in each module to make for a typical four-course semester load.

With the low number of cases, more professors were able to offer in-person classes and meetings by the start of the second module, according to Overvoorde. But because of the rising number of COVID cases statewide, the campus went to all remote learning on November 20. A college survey indicated that 20 percent of the students who were on campus planned to remain at home following the Thanksgiving break and study remotely through the end of the semester on December 19, he said.

Macalester's second semester, which begins on January 19, will also have two modules, but beyond that, the spring term is largely unscripted. "This virus is so unpredictable," Overvoorde said. "I have a sense of optimism, but there are still a lot of lingering questions. We're hoping that by next fall the concern about COVID will be a lot lower."

Faricy's hope is that the gift bags will give Macalester students some joy over the holidays. As for her own contributions, "I could be sad about the tens of thousands of dollars going out the door," she said, "but it's beautiful stuff, and it's making people happy."

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## VILLAGER 2021

DATES AND EVENTS FOR THE NEW YEAR

**January**

- 6 - Education
- 6 - Health & Fitness
- 20 - Education

**February**

- 3 - Summer Camp
- 3 - Valentine's Day
- 17 - Boomers & Beyond

**March**

- 3 - Home Improvement Fair
- 3 - St. Patrick's Day
- 17 - Home Improvement
- 31 - Home Improvement
- 31 - Easter

**April**

- 14 - Home Improvement
- 28 - Gardening
- 28 - Mother's Day

**May**

- 12 - Health & Fitness
- 12 - Graduation
- 26 -

**June**

- 9 - Father's Day
- 23 - Boomers & Beyond

**July**

- 7 - Highland Fest
- 7 - Rondo Days
- 21 - Real Estate

**August**

- 4 - Education
- 18 - Education

**September**

- 1 - Home Improvement
- 1 - Selby Jazz Fest
- 15 - Home Improvement
- 29 - Home Improvement

**October**

- 13 - Boomers & Beyond
- 13 - Halloween
- 27 - General Election
- 27 - Halloween

**November**

- 10 - Holiday Gift Ideas
- 24 - Holiday Gift Ideas

**December**

- 8 - Holiday Gift Ideas
- 22 - Last Minute Gift Idea
- 22 - Education
- 22 - Health & Fitness

For more information, contact Gary Ball at 651-699-1462 or email [gball@myvillager.com](mailto:gball@myvillager.com)

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## Christmas Services at Area Churches

In the past we have provided information on the Christmas services at area churches. This year, because of the Covid-19, each church has special conditions that are in place for its Christmas services. We encourage you to find the website of the church that you are interested in attending and to get their specific information. Each of the churches can be telephoned. We hope this is helpful.



*May the deep and abiding joys of Christmas fill your heart and bring you every happiness.*

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# The show goes on

## Despite pandemic and postponements, Circus Juventas returns to the big top with new holiday production in January

BY FRANK JOSSI

Following a spring and summer marked by staff layoffs and other belt-tightening in the wake of the first COVID-19 lockdown, Circus Juventas was planning a triumphant return to the big top with its first-ever Christmas show on the first two weekends of December. Then came Governor Tim Walz's November 18 declaration of a second lockdown through mid-December.

*A Hygge Holiday* is now scheduled for three evening performances and two weekend matinees on January 28-31 under the big top at 1270 Montreal Ave. Tickets will go on sale

in mid-December.

The plan is to require all circus-goers to wear facemasks, enter the arena at staggered times and watch the show from socially distanced seats. Following state guidelines, the big top will be limited to a maximum of 250 people, or a quarter of its capacity. Performers will maintain a minimum 12-foot distance from the audience. They will wear facemasks at all times when off-stage. When on stage, they will have a choice not to be masked if they are at least six feet from all other performers.

*A Hygge Holiday* is Circus Juventas' first show since the summer of 2019. It tells the story of a group of

young people heading up north on a ski trip. Their car breaks down in the woods where they find themselves with no shelter or phone and only the strength of their friendship to rely on.

"The story is about them coming together," said assistant artistic director Rachel Butler-Norris. "We also just want to show everyone that we're still here and we're still performing and putting on a show."

Butler-Norris is the daughter of Dan and Betty Butler, the couple who founded the youth circus and school 25 years ago. Betty Butler "has crafted a show with a very simple story line that's uplifting and a happy family holiday event," Dan said. Instead of the usual epic three-plus-hour production, the performance has been cut to 70 minutes with no intermission and no concessions.

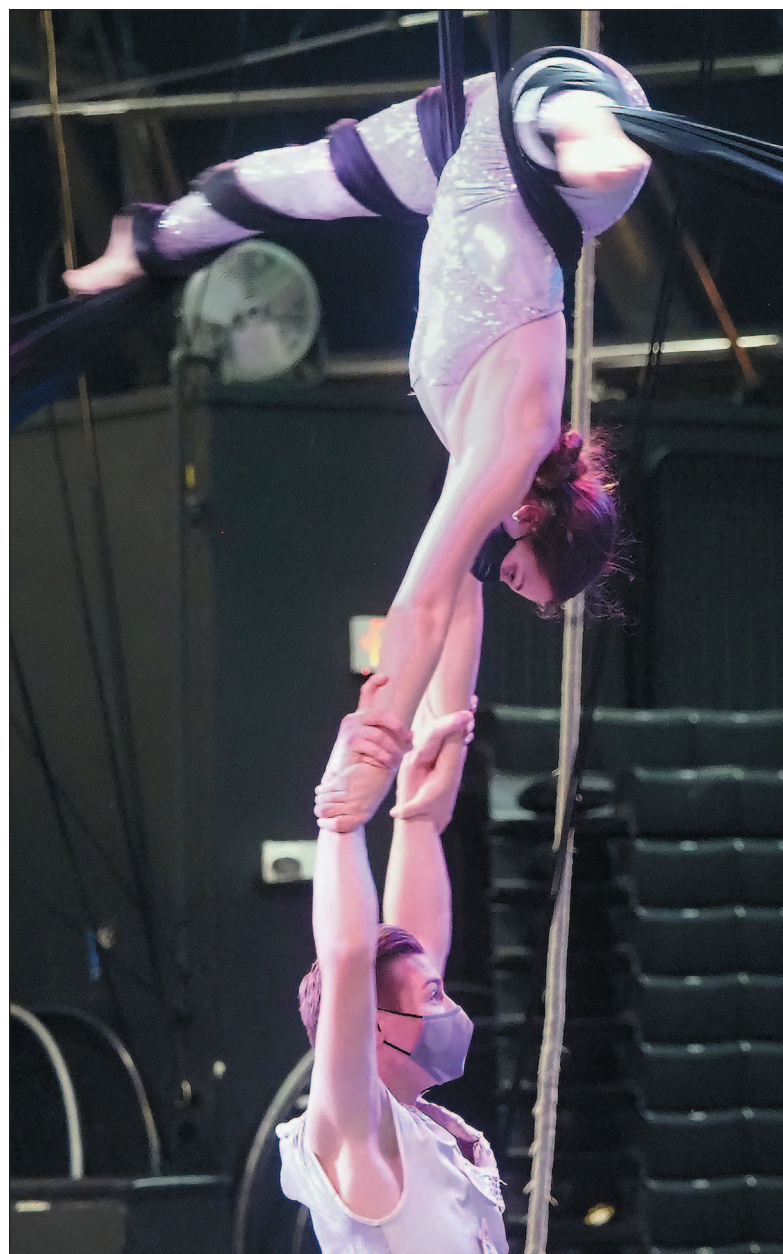
Like most arts organizations, Circus Juventas has taken a significant financial and artistic hit during the pandemic. Every five years, Circus Juventas has held an anniversary celebration that draws as many as 10,000 people. Planning for this year's 25th anniversary celebration ended with the outbreak of COVID-19, Butler said. Instead of the big celebration, the company presented an online performance and fundraiser that raised \$212,000. "It was just like the most unbelievable, heartfelt, heart-warming thing that our community could do to help us keep going," Butler said.

Last March Butler had to lay off 70 employees and cancel the spring show, which would have involved as many as 800 entertainers, three different sets and 12 performances. Circus Juventas also canceled its summer camps as well as its summer show, which regularly sold as many as 22,000 tickets. The losses amounted to half the theater's revenue, Butler said. A federal Paycheck Protection Program loan provided some financial stability, but the circus still had to cut salaries.

Without the benefit of in-person classes and hands-on instruction, the circus' teachers developed nearly 40 online classes augmented by occasional demonstrations in front of students' homes, Butler said. Butler-Norris taught her classes via Zoom by talking students through



Emme Martini, 18, practices her aerial silks routine in preparation for Circus Juventas' first-ever holiday show, rescheduled for January 28-31 under the big top.



Danny Butler and Juliette Kline, both 18, rehearse for Circus Juventas' holiday show, *A Hygge Holiday*, rescheduled for January 28-31. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

*For its 25th anniversary, the company presented an online performance that raised \$212,000. "It was just like the most unbelievable, heartfelt, heartwarming thing that our community could do to help us keep going," Butler said.*

tricks, performing exercises with them, showing videos and miming movements. "It's really, really different," she said. "It forced all of us to be super-creative about how we teach."

Three board members and five staff members came up with a preparedness plan that allowed Circus Juventas to reopen in July with 180 advanced students. Fall enrollment

jumped to 580 students—far short of the usual 1,000 students at the start of the school year. Classes were scaled back from 60 to 45 minutes to give staff time to clean the equipment before the next class commenced.

Teachers and students have all been wearing face masks and staying at least six feet apart. One student and one staff member contracted COVID, but neither of them caught it from attending a circus class, Butler said.

This fall's part-time schedule has circus coaches working fewer hours and making only half their usual salaries, Butler said. Five staff members were permanently let go.

Butler hopes a COVID vaccine will allow Circus Juventas to regroup and open more fully next spring or summer. "We're hopeful that at some point next year things will be back to quasi-normal," he said.

Tickets for *A Hygge Holiday* are \$40, or \$30 for children age 10 and under. For more information or reservations, visit [circusjuventas.org](http://circusjuventas.org) or call 651-699-8229.

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# St. Paul reimagines delivery of its public safety services

## Commission's focus will be on new ways to respond to many lower-priority police calls

BY JANE MCCLURE

Saint Paul City Council members voted unanimously on November 18 to establish a 40-person Community First Public Safety Commission and provide it with a \$71,200 budget. Plans for the commission had been announced the previous day by Mayor Melvin Carter. The group will be led by the nonprofit Citizens League and is expected to wrap up its work in May. That in turn will inform the city's 2022 budget process.

The commission is an outgrowth of this year's \$1.7 million Community First Public Safety program, which was a late addition to the 2020 city budget in response to rising crime rates. Some City Council members, although mindful of the pandemic's impact on city services, have been impatient about the program's slow launch.

"Now more than ever, amid the many crises we face, re-envisioning emergency response is a critical step toward realizing safer outcomes," Carter said. "This commission will help us expand our Community First Public Safety framework and further chart a path forward for our community."

As of November 24, Saint Paul had 30 homicides in 2020, equaling the total for all of 2019. Rising rates of gunshot injuries and other crimes have roiled many neighborhoods. Incidents of gun violence have risen nationally during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the wake of the death of George Floyd while the custody of Minneapolis Police.

Citizens League executive director Kate Cimino said the league is not coming in with a predetermined solution to the issues facing the city, but will work to gather diverse perspectives on them. A few years ago the league led the city's research on raising the minimum wage.

Carter hopes to announce his commission picks soon. He said the group will represent a broad spectrum of the city. City Council members are already pushing for some groups to be represented, including the Black Ministerial Alliance and those who live in neighborhoods hit hardest by crime.

The mayor also emphasized that the commission's work will be ongoing, and that continued responses to issues of violence and policing are needed. In his 2021 budget talks, the mayor called for mental health workers, housing counselors, social workers and other

non-law enforcement experts to work with police on some calls.

A major focus for the commission will be on 911 calls and new ways to respond to many types of lower-priority calls. Police in recent years have already shifted calls such as property damage, auto accidents and theft to on-line reporting. Lower-priority calls now being eyed for change include parking complaints, shoplifters held by store personnel, and barking dogs.

Police Chief Todd Axtell said he supports the commission and its study of 911 calls, saying that other means of responding frees up police officers for more urgent calls.

The push to redirect 911 calls comes at a time when the Police Department faces rising calls and cuts in its officer ranks. Axtell has estimated that there will be a record number of 911 calls in 2020—about 77,820.

The commission will also look at creating a separate city office to oversee Community First Public Safety, and possibly an office of violence prevention.

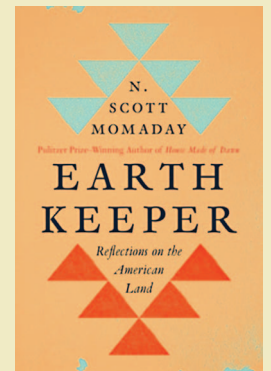
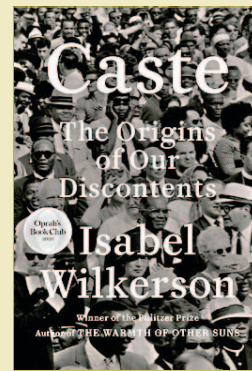
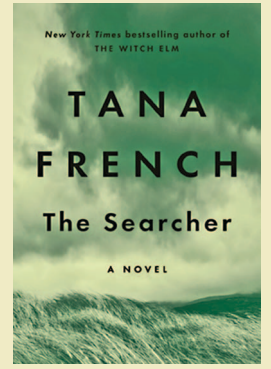
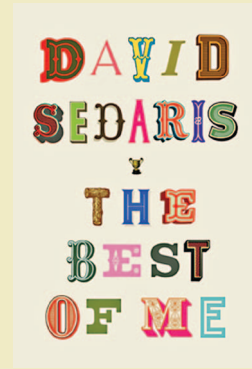
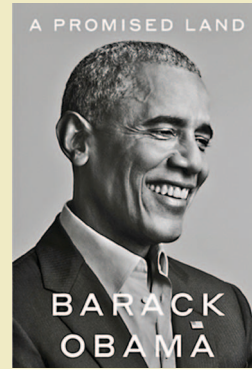
City Council members unanimously supported the commission and praised its co-chairs and the involvement of the Citizens League. The co-chairs are John Marshall, Xcel Energy's director of community relations, and Acooa Ellis, a senior vice president of the Greater Twin Cities United Way. They both are former City Council legislative aides. Marshall worked for Pat Harris in Ward 3 and Ellis for Carter when he represented Ward 1.

### Correction

Contrary to a story in the November 25 *Villager*, Rose Street Patisserie is not moving out of Keg and Case Market at 928 W. Seventh St. Rose Street Patisserie closed its kiosk there last March in response to the health concerns of staff, according to spokesperson Mary Quinn McCallum. However, owner and pastry chef John Knaus and his business partner and wife Elizabeth Rose plan to expand the kiosk by taking over an adjacent stall in preparation for the eventual reopening of Keg and Case Market. The couple closed Rose Street Cafe in the adjacent Rathskeller building in July due to the pandemic; however, their Bread Lab in the same building continues to create wholesale products for the Rose Street Patisserie at Selby and Snelling avenues and other retail clients.

*"Now more than ever, amid the many crises we face, re-envisioning emergency response is a critical step toward realizing safer outcomes," Carter said.*

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# Giving from heartland

## Independent retailers across area offer to fill your Christmas gift list

BY ANNE MURPHY

Local independent retailers have been making their lists and checking them twice to ensure customers find comfort in safe shopping and joy in giving this holiday season. Their shops are stocked with gifts to delight, enchant, enrich and educate, and to keep their recipients warm throughout the winter.

"We really do have something for everyone," said Sarah Sweet, owner and operator of I Like You Too, 416 S. Snelling Ave. "Right now is one of my favorite times of the year. Artists get to break out of their normal crafting routine and try something new and fun."

I Like You Too specializes in consignment gifts from local artisans. Sweet and co-owner Angela Lessman opened I Like You in Minneapolis in 2007 and I Like You Too in 2016. Sweet, who lives just eight blocks away on Saint Clair Avenue, showed off an ornament that reads, "Love from Saint Paul"; matching hat and mittens that read, "UFF DA"; and the book *Murder in Minnesota—A Collection of True Cases* by Walter N. Trenerry.

"Other products for which we get the most complimentary feedback are our array of affordable jewelry, greeting cards, candles,

*"Twenty twenty has been a tough year," Next Chapter's David Enyeart said. "We've really missed having readers in the store to talk about books."*

soaps, tea towels and T-shirts," Sweet said. "It's definitely not a normal holiday season. Will it be enough to pull us through? We don't know. We aren't giving up though."

Charlemagne Fine Jewelry, 1262 Grand Ave., is once again aglow with its custom creations. Charles and Harriet Fogarty opened the store in 1974, and of all of their 47 holiday shopping seasons, this one comes with the sincerest hope that shoppers find an abundance of joy in buying gifts, Harriet said.

"It's been a really tough year for all of us along Grand Avenue. There has never been anything like it," she said, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic and the civil unrest following the death of George Floyd. "We also had our website hacked."

Charlemagne has always offered diamonds and gemstones with unique handmade settings, and "we have exquisite pieces this year," Harriet said. Customers may also appreciate the shop's hand-blown glass.

"We want shopping to be a special occasion, an incredible experience," Harriet said. To support



I Like You Too clerk Swilla Wiederin giftwraps an order behind a selection of the Snelling Avenue gift shop's ceramic mugs. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

that, she and her staff are following all safety guidelines, from sanitizing surfaces to wearing masks. "We can't offer cookies as in past years, but customers can be assured of security and safety," she said.

At Cadenza Music, 149 N. Snelling Ave., owner Dan Lehn is offering sheet music, instruments and online music lessons as gifts. "We have holiday music for piano, ukulele, guitar, and band and orchestra instruments," said Lehn, who purchased the 46-year-old store last January after having worked there. "As for selection, we do have a shortage of some instruments, notably guitars and digital pianos, but we have a healthy selection of ukuleles and band and orchestra instruments. We're also leasing musical instruments—woodwinds, brass and strings—at a prorated amount to encourage students of all ages and experience to sign up."

Cadenza's large staff of instructors have been offering lessons online since the COVID outbreak began, according to Lehn. "The private, one-on-one instruction is delivered straight to our customers' homes," he said.

Next Chapter Booksellers manager David Enyeart said the store at 38 S. Snelling Ave. is pleased to offer shopping by appointment this holiday season. "Customers can come into a portion of the store, browse a selection of our favorite books and talk to a bookseller to get recommendations," he said. "It strikes a good balance between helping customers get that bookstore experience while keeping staff

separated and safe. Or, if you know exactly what you want, we have quick and easy curbside pickup with no reservations required."

For parents, Next Chapter is recommending *The Highlights Book of Things to Do*. "It is packed with activities to keep children entertained and thinking," Enyeart said. "Foodies should check out *Land of 10,000 Plates: Stories and Recipes from Minnesota*. Pair it with a copy of *Pints North: Minnesota's Craft Beer Culture*, and you've got a gift to tempt just about anyone's taste buds.

"People who want to celebrate today's Minnesota should pick up *Somewhere in the Unknown World: A Collective Refugee Memoir*," according to Enyeart. In it, Saint Paul author Kao Kalia Yang has compiled stories of immigrants from around the world who made their way to the Twin Cities.

"Twenty twenty has been a tough year," Enyeart said. "We've really missed having readers in the store to talk about books."

Sisters Lucy Egberg and Jeni Schmit own and operate Roseberry Kids out of their homes on Goodrich and Portland avenues, respectively. Their mother is Bolivian, and most of the online store's merchandise is from South America.

"We hang our hats on our Peruvian children's sweaters," Egberg said. "Sweaters are our most popular seller because they're a unique and practical gift for any child and



Modern home decor found at Charlemagne Fine Jewelry. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

HOLIDAY GIVING ► 15

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# Business Briefs

**The Pillars of Highland Park**, 1925 Norfolk Ave., has named Annalise Wasberg its new manager of Dimensions Memory Care. Wasberg hails from Marshall, Minnesota, and studied at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She has extensive experience in senior living enrichment and most recently worked for Walker Methodist. Learn more about the Dimensions program at [ebenezercares.org/dimensions-program.html](http://ebenezercares.org/dimensions-program.html).

**Hiway Credit Union**, which has local branches near downtown Saint Paul and Fort Snelling, has officially moved to a Minnesota state charter, dropping the “federal” from its name. It was founded in 1931 to serve the employees of the Minnesota Highway Department. President/CEO David Boden said the state charter allows it more flexibility to add branches and better serve its members. The charter change

means anyone who lives, works, worships or attends school in the seven-county metro area is eligible to join.

**Leadership Saint Paul**, a personal and professional development program of the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce Charitable Foundation, is seeking applications for its class of 2021. Preference will be given to the first 100 applications received. This will be the 41st class of Leadership Saint Paul graduates. The application deadline is December 15. To apply, visit [form.jotform.com/202945781772162](http://form.jotform.com/202945781772162).

**The Wireless Zone**, 740 Main St, #102, Mendota Heights, is partnering with the Marine Corps Reserve’s Toys for Tots campaign to collect new toys for less fortunate children this Christmas. Toys can be dropped off at the store through December 12.

# Religious Notes

“**Be the Light**,” a virtual Hanukkah event that celebrates the Jewish concept of *tikkun olam* (repairing the world), will be offered on Thursday, December 10, by the Jewish Community Center. The program will begin at 4:15 p.m. with a candle lighting. That will be followed by a craft activity. Instructor PJ Library will show how to make a Hanukkah-inspired window installation with materials found around the home, such as bubble wrap, wrapping paper, tissue paper, construction paper, wax paper, tin foil, yarn, ribbons, string, tape, glue and twist ties. Visit [stpauljcc.org](http://stpauljcc.org).

**The Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company** will present a virtual reading of *The Chanukah Guest* by Eric Kimmel at 3 p.m. Friday, Decem-

ber 11. The live presentation by Kim Kivens, Joshua Bagley and Craig Johnson is free, but reservations are required. Call 651-647 4315.

**Or Emet**, the Minnesota Congregation for Humanistic Judaism, will host the following online programs: a Hanukkah party from 5-6:30 p.m. Saturday, December 12, including a blessing and candle lighting, games, music and presentations by children from the congregation’s Jewish cultural school; and Hamline University professor David Schultz speaking on “What Happened in the 2020 Election and Why It Matters” from 10-11:30 a.m. Saturday, December 19 (a short Sabbath service will precede the program). To register, email Scott Chazdon at [president@oremnet.org](mailto:president@oremnet.org).

## 14 HOLIDAY GIVING

they seem to last forever. As we endure COVID this winter, these sweaters will brighten your day and keep your kiddos cozy and warm. And you can pair the sweaters with fun hair accessories and toys.”

Before the pandemic, Roseberry Kids sold exclusively at the Minnesota State Fair and the European Christmas Market outside Saint Paul’s Union Depot. “People encouraged us to start a website so we could keep in touch and they could shop year-round,” Egberg said. “COVID forced us to take the plunge. I think we’re all looking for silver linings through this incredibly challenging time, and this is one of those silver linings for us.”

Every December Anthony Scornavacco Antiques at 23 W. Sixth St. is transformed into a Christmas wonderland with a vast collection of handmade ornaments from Germany, Italy and Poland. This year owner Tony Scornavacco is particularly proud of two ornaments that commemorate Saint Paul. Handmade in Poland, the ornaments depict Landmark Center and the Como Conservatory.

Scornavacco is carrying on a long tradition of bringing holiday joy to customers of all ages. “I have customers who came here as children at Christmas and are now bringing their children and grandchildren,” he said. Their joy provided all of the motivation he needed to once again make space among his



Co-owner Harriet Fogarty is surrounded by a colorful assortment of handcrafted stone and glass vessels and sculpture at Charlemagne Fine Jewelry, 1262 Grand Ave. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

antiques for a 14-foot Christmas tree.

Setting up the tree is always an enormous undertaking, according to Scornavacco, but one that was especially important this year. Shoppers who come to see the shop’s tree and ornaments can be assured that all prescribed safety precautions are in place, he said.

“I’m proud to be a part of this corner of Saint Paul,” Scornavacco said. That part of downtown, with the Hamm Building, Saint Paul Hotel, Landmark Center and Rice Park, exemplifies the beauty and spirit of the city, he said.

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# Crime Report

The following crime incidents were compiled from Saint Paul and Mendota Heights police department reports and other sources.

## Highland Park

**Robbery**—A strong-arm robbery was reported on the 2000 block of Ford Parkway at 6:43 p.m. Sunday, November 15.

**Burglary**—Garage burglaries were reported on the 500 block of Brimhall Street on November 13, two on the 1800-2000 blocks of Highland Parkway on November 16, the 1900 block of Ford Parkway on November 19, and the 700 block of South Cleveland Avenue on November 25.

—Residential burglaries were reported on the 1300 block of Watson Avenue and the 1000 block of Otto Avenue on November 19, two on the 2200 block of Stewart Avenue on November 23, the 2300 block of Edgcombe Road on November 23, and the 2200 block of West Seventh Street and the 2200 block of Stewart on November 24.

**Theft**—Thefts of items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 1700 block of Scheffer Avenue on November 15, the 1900 block of Norfolk Avenue on November 17, the 2200 block of Ford Parkway on November 18, the 1800 block of Graham Avenue on November 23, and the 2000 block of Ford Parkway on November 25.

—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 2200 block of West Seventh Street on November 18, and the 600 block of South Snelling Avenue on November 19.

**Weapons**—Gunfire was reported on Saunders Avenue and Davern Street on November 15, and the 1400 block of Pleasant Avenue on November 25.

**Miscellaneous**—A narcotics incident involving the possession of heroin was reported at 1:14 a.m. Tuesday, November 17, on West Seventh Street and Dealton Avenue.

—Felony damage to property was reported on the 1700 block of Bayard Avenue at 11:57 p.m. Tuesday, November 17.

## Lexington-Hamline

**Burglary**—A garage burglary was reported on the 1100 block of Ashland Avenue at 8:30 a.m. Friday, November 13.

**Theft**—A shoplifting loss of over \$1,000 was reported on the 1300 block of University Avenue at 5:54 p.m. Thursday, November 12.

—A vehicle was reported stolen on the 1300 block of University Avenue on Wednesday,

November 18.

**Sex crime**—A rape was reported on the 1100 block of Marshall Avenue at 2:02 a.m. Saturday, November 14.

## Macalester-Groveland

**Burglary**—A burglary was reported on the 1300 block of Grand Avenue at 12:38 p.m. Friday, November 13.

—Garage burglaries were reported on the 1400 block of Grand Avenue on November 15, the 1700 block of Berkeley Avenue on November 17, the 200 block of South Snelling Avenue on November 22, the 300 block of Warwick Street and the 300 block of South Snelling Avenue on November 23, and the 400 block of South Saratoga Street on November 24.

—A residential break-in was reported on the 200 block of South Snelling Avenue at 9:37 a.m. Tuesday, November 24.

**Theft**—Thefts of items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 300 block of South Hamline Avenue on November 12, the 1200 block of Osceola Avenue on November 14, and the 1400 block of Saint Clair Avenue on November 20.

**Assault**—An aggravated assault was reported on Randolph and Snelling Avenues at 1:40 a.m. Friday, November 13.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony criminal damage to property was reported on the 2000 block of Grand Avenue at 5 a.m. Thursday, November 19.

## Mendota Heights

**Burglary**—An item was reported stolen from a vehicle in a garage on the 1000 block of Highway 13 at 11:13 a.m. Friday, November 13.

**Theft**—A running vehicle was reported stolen at 5:46 a.m. Tuesday, November 17, on the 1300 block of Third Street.

**Miscellaneous**—Police responded to a 911 call about a friend who drove off, leaving the caller and a child abandoned at a business on Dodd Road and Wesley Lane at 11:27 p.m. Friday, November 13. The caller said he was driving his friend's car because his friend was drunk. The caller stopped at the business so his child could use the bathroom. They returned to find the drunk friend driving away. The suspect's vehicle was located about 40 minutes later and the driver was arrested after refusing to take a DWI test.

—The illegal dumping of old cabinets and other construction material was reported in the park at the end of Historic Pilot Knob at 1:56 p.m. Saturday, November 14.

## Merriam Park

**Burglary**—Garage burglaries were reported on the 400 block of Otis Avenue November 12, on Carroll Avenue and Pascal Street on November 12, and on the 1800 block of University Avenue on November 19.

**Theft**—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 400 block of North Roy Street on November 13, and the 100 block of North Wilder Street on November 15.

—Thefts of items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 1600 block of Marshall Avenue on November 19, and the 400 block of North Fairview Avenue on November 23.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony criminal damage to property was reported on the 1800 block of University Avenue on November 14 and the 300 block of Pierce Street on November 18.

—A narcotics incident involving the possession of methamphetamine was reported at 6:13 a.m. Wednesday, November 18, on the 400 block of North Cleveland Avenue.

**Fire**—A fire in a recreational vehicle parked at a homeless camp was reported at 4:50 a.m. Monday, November 30, at I-94 near Cretin Avenue. According to media reports, a 51-year-old man was hospitalized for smoke inhalation and several tents were destroyed.

## Summit Hill

**Burglary**—A burglary was reported on the 100 block of South Dunlap Street at 9:43 a.m. Wednesday, November 18.

—A commercial break-in was reported on the 90 block of Grand Avenue at 3:43 a.m. Saturday, November 21.

**Theft**—Vehicles were reported stolen on the 400 block of Grand Avenue on November 13 and 24.

—Thefts of items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from two vehicles on the 900 block of Grand Avenue on Thursday, November 19.

**Weapons**—Gunfire was reported on Grand Avenue and Dale Street at 2:31 a.m. Saturday, November 14.

## Summit-University

**Robbery**—Strong-arm robberies were reported on the 400 block of Selby Avenue on November 13, the 200 block of North Dale Street on November 16, and on Dayton Avenue and Mackubin Street on November 18.

**Burglary**—Two burglaries were reported

on the 600 block of Laurel Avenue on the weekend of November 14-15.

—A residential break-in was reported on the 1000 block of Summit Avenue at 10:30 a.m. Friday, November 20.

—Garage burglaries were reported on the 1000 block of Portland Avenue on November 21, and the 200 block of Maiden Lane on November 23.

**Theft**—Two vehicles were reported stolen on the 700 blocks of Dayton and Iglehart avenues on November 14. Others were reported stolen on the 800 block of Concordia Avenue and the 400 block of Portland Avenue on November 21.

**Assault**—An aggravated assault was reported on the 300 block of Marshall Avenue at 8:33 a.m. Saturday, November 14.

**Weapons**—Gunfire was reported on the 300 block of Dayton Avenue on November 22, and on Concordia Avenue and Victoria Street on November 24.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony criminal damage to property was reported on the 900 block of Marshall Avenue at 3:40 p.m. Thursday, November 12.

## West End

**Robbery**—A robbery at gunpoint was reported on the 300 block of South Exchange Street at 11:34 p.m. Monday, November 16.

**Burglary**—A commercial break-in was reported on the 700 block of South Victoria Street at midnight Saturday, November 14.

—Garage burglaries were reported on the 700 block of Stewart Avenue on November 20, and the 800 block of Juno Avenue on November 21.

**Theft**—Thefts of items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 700 block of Mercer Street on November 16, the 100 block of West Seventh Street on November 19, and the 100 block of Kellogg Boulevard on November 20.

—Vehicles were reported stolen on Saint Clair Avenue and Erie Street on November 12, the 300 block of Arbor Street and the 800 block of Jefferson Avenue on November 13, and the 1000 block of West Seventh Street and the 400 block of View Street on November 17.

—Three vehicles were reported stolen on the 1100 block of Pleasant Avenue on Wednesday, November 25.

**Weapons**—Gunfire was reported on the 800 block of Palace Avenue at 9:28 p.m. Sunday, November 15.



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# ON THE TOWN

## The sounding joy

### UST musicians find the will and way to present annual Christmas concert

BY ANNE MURPHY

The gift of a Christmas concert has been a holiday tradition for the University of Saint Thomas Music Department since 1988. This year—despite the need for special orchestration because of COVID-19—the tradition continues with a virtual presentation of “A Saint Thomas Christmas: Respite and Grace” in mid-December. The 33rd annual Yuletide musical will feature more than 300 student performers from six Saint Thomas ensembles—the Chamber Singers, Concert Choir, Liturgical Choir, String Orchestra, Symphonic Wind Ensemble and Donne Unite.

“I was determined last March when we first realized the impact COVID would have that we’d still produce a Christmas concert this year,” said Dr. Matthew J. George, professor and director of bands and orchestras at Saint Thomas. “This fall I’d check my email first thing every morning to see if our university president had made an announcement that all classes would need to be moved online. That would have been a death knell for performing ensembles. We’ve made it, and we were able to record all that needed to be recorded.”

“The concert is a flagship event for the university, and we wanted to keep that tradition going,” George said. “We wanted to share our music, especially in these difficult times. I also wanted to inspire our audience with the sheer will, resilience, tenacity and perseverance that our students exhibit each and every day. It wasn’t easy for them to be in rehearsal every week. In fact, for some students, the ensemble classes were the only in-person classes they had.”

This year’s resolve is similar to what was behind the first Christmas concert, performed when Saint Thomas was still a college. The late Monsignor Terrence J. Murphy was the school’s president then, and he wanted a Christmas concert featuring ensembles from Saint Thomas and neighboring Saint Catherine, then also a college. That concert was performed on December 11, 1988, in the Chapel of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

By 1993 the Christmas concert was being presented solely by the Saint Thomas Music Department with invitations extended to alumni. RSVPs were so numerous that several performances had to be added. By 1997

the ticket requests for four performances outnumbered the available seats by 2,000. Ten years later, the Christmas concert was moved to Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis where it has been performed ever since. The performance has been recorded for rebroadcast by Twin Cities Public Television and distributed to stations nationwide.

“Presenting the event virtually is an enormous undertaking, much more demanding than streaming a symphony performance with one group of musicians,” said Saint Thomas senior violin performance

major Vivian Murphy. “I don’t think any of us expected a Christmas concert this year. Even though the concert will look very different, we were all thrilled that there would be a formal recorded performance.”

“Students came in this fall so looking forward to making music together in person,” said Saint Thomas alumna Angela Mitchell,

who conducts the treble voice choir Donne Unite. “They all experienced the March shutdown and the loss of their singing community, so it was so joyful from the very first rehearsal.

“I think we knew from day one that the traditional Christmas concert wasn’t going

*“We were all thrilled with the possibility of a virtual concert, so students still had an opportunity to share their work and the Christmas spirit.”*



Masked and socially distanced, Saint Thomas tuba player Will Pitner rehearses with other orchestra members for this year’s virtual Christmas concert. PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

to be possible,” Mitchell said. “We were all thrilled with the possibility of a virtual concert, so students still had an opportunity to share their work and the Christmas spirit.”

“We’re super-excited to share our music with everyone,” said Dr. Albert Pinsonneault, an assistant professor and the director of the Chamber Singers and Concert Choir. The effort on the part of the students, faculty and entire university to honor the necessary COVID-19 safety constraints has been nothing short of phenomenal, he said.

For Pinsonneault, that effort involved figuring out how to have the students sing together and still be safe. In the fall, he secured miniature pylons for outside class work to ensure students could be together yet distanced. The administration also honored Music Department requests for indoor rehearsal spaces where safe distancing could be arranged.

“We’re strictly adhering to the safety protocols recommended by a national study on performance aerosol mitigation and to the protocols of the CDC and the state Department of Health,” George said. “That required our choral and instrumental ensemble members to wear special performance masks and be distanced no less than 6 feet and in some cases 9 feet apart.

“The woodwind and brass players have special covers for their bells to reduce aerosol emissions,” George said. “Rigorous entry and exit procedures as well as

sanitation regulations were also in play. We have carefully orchestrated ventilation plans so that we’re always operating with clean air protocols. The days of everyone rehearsing together on stage, chairs and stands right next to each other, are now on hold.”

“We also had to be extremely careful with the time we spent singing,” Mitchell said. “For a typical Christmas concert, we’d rehearse at Orchestra Hall for a full 30 minutes alone and then would be recorded performing the piece three additional times. This year we had only one or two takes of each piece. We had to be very efficient.”

“There has been no virus spread traced to ensemble rehearsals, a fact for which we’re both proud and grateful,” said Music Department liaison Donna Matuszewski. “Our students have really shown resilience this year in adapting to all the changes, but what strikes me most is their gratitude. Musical expression is essential to their education, and they’ve embraced every challenge to ensure they’re able to continue and even thrive.”

“I’ve learned never to underestimate my own and others’ resourcefulness and resilience,” Vivian Murphy said. “I’ve been so impressed by my colleagues’ enthusiasm to adjust to a very different rehearsal environment. While the semester has been exhausting, I hope we’ve realized how we can meet our challenges head-on, creatively and with determination. Our systems and tools have grown significantly out of necessity to encompass a more virtual approach, which will help everyone, especially the music community, teach and perform with more flexibility and reach.”

The Christmas concert is expected to be available on December 18 on the University of Saint Thomas’ YouTube page. For updates and a link to the concert once it is released, visit [link.stthomas.edu/respitandgrace2020](http://link.stthomas.edu/respitandgrace2020).



Flutist Anna Check rehearses for the Tommies’ Christmas concert that is expected to be available on December 18 on YouTube.

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# ON THE TOWN *Briefly*

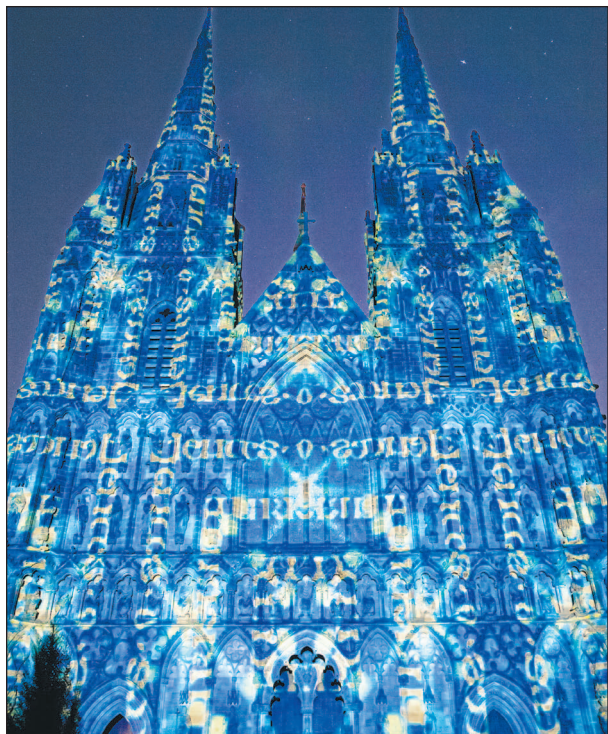
## Theater

**Minnesota Jewish Theatre Company's** *Operation: Immigration* returns online from December 10-13. Avi Aharoni stars as a young Minnesotan who searches for information about his late father, an Iranian Jew, and in the process begins to find himself. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursday, 8 p.m. Saturday, and 11 a.m., 1 and 7 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$15. Visit [mnjewishtheatre.org](http://mnjewishtheatre.org) or call 651-647-4315.

**The theater departments** of Visitation School and Saint Thomas Academy will stream their recent filming of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* online from December 11-14. Based on the novel by Mark Haddon, the play is directed by Wendy Short-Hays and Elliot Hays. It was chosen by Short-Hays because of its message of hope and that it could be told by actors a COVID-safe 8 to 10 feet apart. The film may be viewed anytime between 6 p.m. Friday and 6 p.m. Monday. Tickets are \$10 per person or \$25 per group. Visit [showtix4u.com/event-details/41774](http://showtix4u.com/event-details/41774).

**Winterlight**, an eclectic mix of classic and original stories, songs and poems to warm the heart at midwinter, will be available free of charge in three episodes released on December 14, 21 and 28 via Girl Friday Productions' YouTube channel, Facebook page and website. The 20-minute episodes will feature such dramas as Willa Cather's "The Burglar's Christmas," O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl," the German fairytale "The Evergreen" and the Japanese folktale "The Snow Woman"; traditional songs; and poems by Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Sara Teasdale and others. Performers include Kirby Bennett, Reese Britts, Craig Johnson, Willie E. Jones III, Sam Landman, Hope Nordquist, James Rodriguez, Taj Ruler, Sophina Saggau and Dana Lee Thompson. Visit [girlfridayproductions.org](http://girlfridayproductions.org).

**"A Virtually Celtic Christmas"** featuring traditional carols, ancient Gaelic hymns, heartwarming duets, choirs and orchestra will be presented by the Ordway online at 7:30 p.m. Friday, December 18. Filmed at the National Opera House of Ireland, the show stars tenor Michael Londra, special guests Zoë Rainey and Eoin Colfer, the Irish Concert Orchestra, Valda Choral Group and Presentation Choir. Tickets are \$25 for the



**Light among us.** The Christmas story will be told on December 17-19 through a 12-minute light show projected on the east facade of the Cathedral of Saint Paul. "Illuminated: The Manger" will run on a continuous loop from 6-9 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Initially created by Luxmuralis for Lichfield Cathedral (above) in Staffordshire, England, "Illumination" recounts the Nativity in traditional and abstract imagery. A musical score accompanies the show. It will be broadcast from Cathedral Hill Park on a radio frequency to be announced. Spectators in cars will be allowed to stop in front of the Cathedral to watch the show, but they must remain in their cars to comply with COVID-19 restrictions. Saint Paul police officers will direct traffic heading one-way north along Summit Avenue. The show will also be streamed live on the Cathedral Heritage Foundation's Facebook page. Visit [cathedralheritagefoundation.org](http://cathedralheritagefoundation.org).

link, \$35 for the link and souvenir DVD, and \$50 for the link, DVD and a meet and greet via Zoom call. Visit [ordway.org](http://ordway.org).

## Dance

**The Snow Queen**, a new ballet made for film, will be presented by the professional Ballet Co.Laboratory and more than 70 students from its school on December 19-20. Special effects and behind-the-scenes footage will augment the virtual dance from the stage of the Cowles Center in Minneapolis. The story follows the adventures of Gerda, a little girl filled with moxie, as she attempts to rescue her brother from the clutches of the Snow Queen. Show times are 7 p.m. Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. A live Q&A with the performers

will follow each show. Tickets are \$40 per household. Visit [balletcolaboratory.org](http://balletcolaboratory.org) or call 651-313-3967.

## Exhibits

**The European Christmas Market** has gone virtual this year due to COVID-19. Instead of the usual festive outdoor setting in downtown Saint Paul, the market is operating a website with 23 vendors offering handmade treasures and the market's own limited-edition gift boxes. Holiday entertainment is also periodically available on the European Christmas Market's Facebook page. For more information, visit [stpaulchristmasmarket.org](http://stpaulchristmasmarket.org).

**Northern Clay Center**, 2424 E. Franklin Ave. in Minneapolis, is holding its annual holiday exhibition through December 30. Eighty-five artists are displaying for show and sale their handmade pottery, sculpture and ceramic jewelry. Visit [northernclaycenter.org](http://northernclaycenter.org) or call 612-339-8007.

## Music

**"A Copasetic Christmas Carol,"** Doug Haining and Charmin Michelle's jazz adaptation of Charles Dickens' classic holiday story, will be performed by the Twin Cities Seven in a virtual concert at 7 p.m. Thursday, December 10. Recorded live, the seven performers are singer Michelle, Haining on alto and soprano saxophone and clarinet, Steve Wright on trumpet, Dave Graf on trombone, Rick Carlson on piano, Kent Saunders on guitar, Steve Pikal on bass and Trevor Haining on drums. The link to the concert is free. Visit [crowdcast.io/e/5b6zobyl](http://crowdcast.io/e/5b6zobyl).

**"A Bass Viol Journey."** Selections from Schenck's Nymphs of the Rhine, Gottfried Finger's Pastoralle from Puer Natus in Bethlehem, Marais' Le Bijou and other music will be performed online via Zoom by the bass viol duo of Eva Lymenstull and Malachai Komanoff Bandy at 7 p.m. Friday and 2 p.m.

Saturday, December 11 and 12. For tickets or information, visit [lyrabaroque.org](http://lyrabaroque.org) or call 651-321-2214.

**Lessons and Carols for Our Time**, a contemporary take on the British holiday tradition, will be presented online in December by the eight-man vocal ensemble Cantus. Weaving together poetry and song, the program draws upon such classics as "Silent Night" and "A La Nanita Nana," Franz Biebl's "Ave Maria" and modern works by Abbie Betinis and Saunder Choi. The first half of the program will be available from 7:30 p.m. Friday, December 11, through 7:30 p.m. Sunday, December 13. The second half will be available from 7:30 p.m. Friday, December 18, through 7:30 p.m. Sunday, December 20. Tickets are by donation with \$20 suggested. To receive the link, visit [cantussings.org](http://cantussings.org).

**Sounds of Blackness** will perform songs from *The Night Before Christmas* in a virtual concert streaming from December 19-31 from the Ordway Concert Hall. A 10-piece band will back the 17 singers in this contemporary adaptation of the classic poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas." Tickets are \$15. For more information, visit [ordway.org](http://ordway.org).

## Books

**Next Chapter Booksellers**, 38 S. Snelling Ave., will host free online readings and discussions with author Rachel Gold and her novel, *Synclair*, at 7 p.m. Wednesday, December 9; poet Margaret Hasse and illustrator Sharon DeMark and their new collection, *Shelter*, at 7 p.m. Thursday, December 10; and poet Patricia Kirkpatrick and her collection, *Blood Moon*, at 7 p.m. Tuesday, December 15. To register, visit [nextchapterbooksellers.com](http://nextchapterbooksellers.com).

**"Lemonade Christmas,"** a staged reading of Merriam Park author Roger Barr's 23rd Christmas story, is being presented from December 10 through January 31 on the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center's Youtube channel. The story delves into the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on a family's holiday traditions. Joining Barr on stage will be actors Brian P. Joyce, Charla Marie Bailey, Terrence C. Newby and Melvin Carter Jr. The video recording is being offered free of charge, though donations are encouraged to Hallie's Q. Brown's Summit-University food shelf. For more information and a link to the reading, visit [hallieqbrown.org](http://hallieqbrown.org).

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# SPORTS



## The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

### Weighing in on college, NFL woes

Although it's been nearly two decades since he was a competitive athlete, there are days when Phil Archer feels an intimate bond with those in the collegiate and professional sports ranks who are dealing with the uncertainties spawned by COVID-19. The Cretin-Derham Hall athletic director was a linebacker in college, including one year at Western Illinois and three years at the University of Minnesota. He was good enough to then earn a contract as a member of the NFL practice squads for both San Diego and Minnesota.

All of which made him a good resource in attempting to understand just what's going on these days in college and pro sports. In case you've been away from sports news sources recently, here's a quick update on some of the upheaval being brought about by the pandemic.

- The University of Minnesota had to cancel two football games in a row due to an outbreak of COVID-19 among players and staff. At last report, the number of infected people stood at 47. The U is next scheduled to try taking the field at Nebraska on December 12.

- The Gopher women's basketball team, which had to shut down practice for a while due to the coronavirus, had just seven players available for its December 2 season opener against Eastern Illinois and its December 6 game against Drake. Due to privacy concerns, no information was released as to why so many players couldn't suit up. The hope is that all hands will be on deck for the Big 10 opener against Michigan State on December 9.

- The date for the NFL game between Baltimore and Pittsburgh had to be moved three times before the Ravens could be cleared from a virus outbreak to play the Steelers on a Wednesday afternoon. That caused two more games scheduled for the next week to be moved as well.

- The Denver Broncos had to sideline all of their quarterbacks for a game against New Orleans due to COVID-19 issues. A rookie wide receiver stepped up under center. He completed one pass and threw two interceptions in the 31-3 loss.

- The San Francisco 49ers were told to leave home for three weeks after Santa Clara County officials banned contact sports for that period of time. Home sweet home field for San Francisco is temporarily outside of Phoenix.

"Athletes will do whatever's necessary to get a game played," Archer said.

The onus thus falls on management to make sure that the games are played in as safe a manner as possible.

Archer knows full well that football is a game of routine. That's why former Michigan coach Bo Schembechler once advocated that all games start at the same time every week.

"It's challenging for a football player when that routine is changed," Archer said. "When you get to college and the pros, the job is to find solutions to problems. You do what you need to do to operate the business side."

That makes things a bit sticky for Mark Coyle, the current U of M athletic director. "They have the best monitoring system they can possibly get," Archer said of the U of M. "What happened over there isn't because they didn't have parameters in place. And the NFL has even more resources than the colleges do."

But it still fell apart in some places because, according to Archer, the NFL players weren't quarantined, as was the case last summer and early fall with NBA and NHL players.

As the high school football season started, Archer knew that things were going to be in flux. What he couldn't know was how flexible he'd have to be to keep the Raiders playing. The season opener was a day away when Roseville found out its football team couldn't play due to the virus. Archer got on the phone and found Lakeville North was available.

"It was a tough matchup for us and we knew it would be," Archer said, "but it was better than not playing." CDH ended up on the short end of the 55-14 game.

WRIGHT CALL ▶20

## Saint Paul to pull plug on some skating rinks

### City looks to restore other reductions to Parks & Rec budget

By Jane McClure

While the Saint Paul City Council is poised to reverse some of the reductions in service proposed by the city's Department of Parks and Recreation as part of its 2021 budget deliberations, the funding for some city ice rinks appears to have melted. Half of the city's 16 locations that offered outdoor skating, including those at Aldine and Nathan Hale parks and the Linwood Recreation Center, will not have rinks this winter.

Other planned Parks and Recreation budget reductions, including youth sports and recreation center hours, were spared in last-minute amendments that were reviewed by the City Council on December 2. The amendments will be voted on as part of the overall 2021 city budget on December 9.

The skating rink closures were looked at earlier this fall by the council during its budget review process. Since then, Governor Tim Walz's executive orders have put all rink preparations for the 2020-21 skating season on hold until after December 18.

City staff will continue to monitor public health guidelines and provide further information once the executive orders expire. Weather and health guidelines permitting, the rinks not affected by budget cuts will be allowed to open.

The loss of some of the rinks is meeting a mixed reaction in local neighborhoods.

"The Linwood Booster Club was not aware of the ice rink being closed due to budget cuts," said club leader Jodi Boyne. She and other boosters are contacting city staff to see what, if anything, can be done.

While the Linwood rink is lighted and has a warming room in the center's lowest level, Nathan Hale and Aldine do not offer such amenities. Cathy Maes, president of the Ramsey Hill Association, said the group was sorry to hear that the Nathan Hale Park rink will not be open this season. Still, she said the association understands the city's need to cut expenses.

The Union Park District Council's Environment and Parks Committee had not heard from anyone concerned about the Aldine Park rink not being available this winter, said committee chair Mike



Teddy Retelle and his dad, Elliott, sharpened their hockey skills in 2018 at Groveland Park, whose rinks are among those scheduled to stay open this winter. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

Robertson. The neighborhood will still have a rink at Desnoyer Park.

Other rinks slated for closure in 2020-21 are at Battle Creek, Griggs, Hayden Heights, Hazel Park and Northwest Como.

Rinks are scheduled to remain in place at CHS Field, Desnoyer, Edgumbe, Groveland, Langford Park, North Dale, Palace and Phalen. CHS, Palace, North Dale and Phalen have refrigerated rinks. Groveland, which is supported by neighborhood volunteers, has a general rink, two hockey rinks and a large oval.

McMurray does not have skating, but does have four broomball rinks.

Saint Paul used to have dozens of rinks in its parks, including Highland Park, Merriam Park, Dunning Park, the West Seventh Community Center's park and even on some Public Works land near Ayd Mill Road that was once known as Ashland Park. Some of those rinks were eliminated as their use declined over the years. Volunteers maintained the rinks, with help from city staff to put up and take down hockey boards.

Parks and Recreation director Mike Hahm told City Council members that his department has had to make difficult budget choices this year. That includes not filling vacant positions and keeping recreational facilities closed for a time to help offset a 2020 budget deficit.

The department was in line for a general fund reduction of nearly 3 percent—about \$1.1 million—before the City Council decided to restore \$452,870 to its 2021 budget. That money will be divvied up among three priorities.

- Recreation center hours will be restored. The original idea was to close the centers at 8 p.m. year-round. Now they will remain open until 9 p.m. during the school year and close at 8 p.m. in the summer.

- Lap swimming and aquatic aerobics will also be restored. Proposed cuts to the aquatics program announced in August sparked a wave of objections.

- Recreation programs for people of all ages also will be restored. Parks and Recreation had proposed focusing on youth sports only for children ages 8 and younger. The intent was to create partnerships with other sports organizations to offer programs for older children, teens and adults.

Highland-Groveland Recreation Association (HGRA) president Dennis Merley said his group is willing to partner with Parks and Recreation if there is a need to shift sports programs in the future. The HGRA offers soccer, baseball and track programs.

"In general, that kind of partnership is an idea we've always embraced," Merley said. "We understand the budget issues the city faces and we already work together on shared fields."

The City Council also is adding back \$1.5 million for library hours and materials budget in 2021. Parks and libraries are an especially important focus for the council after months of limited or no service due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Those are places people are desperate to get back to as soon as they can," said Ward 2 City Council member Rebecca Noecker.

## Local prep athletes sign college letters of intent

By Dave Wright

November 11 was a big day for many local high school athletes who signed national letters of intent to play for college teams. That includes Henry Sibley track star Caroline Anderson, who was one of the first to sign with the University of Saint Thomas as it makes the unprecedented leap from Division III to Division I next year.

Perhaps the most surprising announcements were that Saint Thomas Academy's Baker Reding and Seppe Chiovera earned college nods to play lacrosse, even though there was no boys' high school lacrosse season this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both players were key to the Cadets' 2019 run to the state lacrosse tournament. Reding, who also quarterbacked STA's undefeated football team this year, was an offensive force in lacrosse, scoring 35 goals. Chiovera spent his time on the other end of the field as a midfielder who often slid back to defense.

Those efforts, along with what they achieved in summer leagues, drew the attention of eastern schools. Reding will play next year at the College of the

Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts, one of the oldest men's college lacrosse programs in the country. He will join his older brother, Hayes, who will be a sophomore defender for the Crusaders next spring.

Chiovera grew up in New Jersey and will be heading back home to play for the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark.

"These two guys put in a lot of work in the summer," said STA lacrosse coach Luke Marks. "There's a firm structure

COLLEGE SIGNINGS ▶20

## 19◀ WRIGHT CALL

Two weeks later, Woodbury called in the afternoon to say it wouldn't be able to play its scheduled game against CDH due to the virus. Archer quickly went to work and found Central ready and willing. The Raiders earned their sole victory of the year by a score of 36-0 against the Minutemen. "None of this has been by the book," he said of the 2020 season.

While it took a lot of scrambling on several levels to get games in this fall, it was all worth it, according to Archer.

"Part of the reason why athletes are involved in sports is because they enjoy the social aspect of it," he said. "It's a big deal to them."

## Oturu heads to the NBA

It didn't take long for CDH boys' basketball coach Jerry Kline to figure out that a gangly freshman named Daniel Oturu should be playing on the varsity. "He was about 6-foot-5 and weighed about 170 pounds when we brought him up," Kline recalled. "He grew a lot during his sophomore year."

He played a lot, too. Oturu became a force to be reckoned with for three years with the Raiders and helped lead them to the state Class AAAA high school championship in 2018. He then was a strong presence for two more seasons with the University of Minnesota. Recently, he became a rarity—a Minnesotan drafted by an NBA team—and is now in camp with the Los Angeles Clippers.

"What impressed us right away was how Daniel used his ability to navigate to defense," Kline said. "We knew the offensive skills would catch up in time. He also was one of the



Clippers draft pick Daniel Oturu helped lead CDH to the state Class AAAA boys' basketball title in 2018.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

most unselfish players we've ever had. He could've scored 35 points a game if he wanted to."

Now 6-foot-10, Oturu naturally stood out on the court. He also had the numbers, averaging 20.1 points and 11.3 rebounds per game as a sophomore at Minnesota. But Kline said the numbers don't do Oturu justice.

"I remember when (Gopher head coach Richard) Pitino came over to talk to him," Kline said. "He (Oturu) started talking about guys like Elgin Baylor and Wilt Chamberlain (NBA stars of the 1960s and '70s). He studies the game as well."

As for where Oturu's athletic skills come from, here's one possibility: His father Francis, a native of Nigeria, played table tennis for that country's national team.

## RIP Jimmy Robinson

Jimmy Robinson, one of the greatest guys you'd ever come across, passed away on November 30 at age 88. A longtime basketball official—he refereed one of Clem Haskins' first games as a college coach—he took on the role of coordinator of basketball refs for the Minnesota State High School League upon retirement. That meant he'd spend a lot of time scouring the state to find officials to work the March state basketball tournaments at Target Center and Williams Arena.

Robinson was in that supervisory role in 2005 when the league decided to add instant replay at the state tournaments. Hopkins and Eastview were involved in a wild Class AAAA title game that was going back and forth. With time running out, Hopkins' Blake Hofferber disappeared from courtside view and was on his backside as he let a shot fly at the buzzer. The ball arched high and dropped perfectly into the net. The question then was: Did Hofferber get the ball off in time?

Three harried officials hurried to the monitor, but were unsure what they were actually looking for. Robinson moved next to the public address announcer and instructed him to start talking to the officials. Meanwhile, he carefully watched the clock in the upper corner of the screen, declared the shot was good and quietly told the officials to signal it as such.

The two-pointer tied the game, sending it into overtime. Hopkins coach Ken Novak rushed over and asked Robinson to call it a three-pointer that would decide the game right there.

Robinson looked up and calmly said, "Don't push your luck, Kenny."

Dave Wright can be reached at [dwright53@msn.com](mailto:dwright53@msn.com).

## 19◀ COLLEGE SIGNINGS

now in the summer leagues with good tournaments. Those are showcase events."

Lacrosse is still in its infancy in Minnesota. But as was the case with girls' hockey two decades ago, it's growing quickly. As it does, players like Reding and Chiovera are arriving at their high schools better coached than in the past.

Reding credits his football background with helping him in lacrosse. "As a quarterback, you're a leader of 10 other guys," he said. "And you have to see the field. It's the same thing as an attacker in lacrosse. You're looking for opportunities all the time."

With an older brother on the roster, Reding had Holy Cross in his sights early on. The

school came courting last spring and Reding signed during the summer.

At 6-foot-3, Chiovera is a towering presence on the back wall for the Cadets. "I try to use my size to my advantage," he said. "It's all about control when you're playing defense."

As he looked at colleges, Chiovera spotted a school with impressive academics and one that was close to his family.

In addition to Reding, Chiovera and Anderson, seven other local athletes signed letters of intent this month to play college sports. As reported here earlier, STA hockey forward Jackson Hallum has committed to Michigan. Fellow Cadet Angelo Pacyga will attend Division II University of Minnesota-Crookston to play baseball.

Visitation had a pair of signees. Andrea

Barth, who scored 18 goals for the Blazer soccer team this fall, is going to play for Boston College. Swimmer Sophia Mattaini, a key ingredient in the Blazers' run to another section title last month, will hit the water next year for South Dakota.

Eva Larson, who scored 18 goals for Minnehaha Academy's soccer team, will be attacking the nets next year at Division II Northern State University in South Dakota.

Cretin-Derham Hall girls' hockey forward Lexi Bonfe will skate next season at Saint Michael's, a new Division I program located in Colchester, Vermont. She will be the second local skater for the Purple Knights. Grace Norris, who played defense for Saint Paul United last year, is a freshman there this year.

Kaylee Steele, a defender from Central who



Kaylee Steele of Central is heading to NMU.

played lacrosse for the Saint Paul Bobcats co-op program, will be heading to Division II Northern Michigan University.

# District Councils

## Highland Park

[highlanddistrictcouncil.org](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org) • 651-695-4005

**Support local businesses**—As 2020 comes to a close, the Highland District Council is encouraging everyone to think about supporting local restaurants, local small retailers and locally owned franchises this holiday season to help them make it through the pandemic.

**At Home in Highland**—Fun Highland Park-related activities that can be done from home will be featured in upcoming editions of the HDC's e-newsletter. Subscribe at [bit.ly/HDCe-news](http://bit.ly/HDCe-news). This month's activity is a Support Local Businesses Bingo. Download a bingo card at [bit.ly/HDCbingo](http://bit.ly/HDCbingo). Participants can learn about ways to support businesses in Highland and track how many bingo squares they complete in December.

**Recycle smart**—Residents are being urged to keep electrical cords and string lights out of their recycling carts. Such items get wrapped around equipment at recycling facilities. Donate working holiday lights and cords or recycle them at a drop-off location. Learn more at [stpaul.gov/recycle](http://stpaul.gov/recycle).

**Upcoming meeting**—board of directors, 7 p.m. Thursday, January 7. All HDC meetings are currently being conducted online via Zoom. Links to access the meetings are being posted on the HDC's website. Visit [highlanddistrictcouncil.org/events](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/events) for future meetings.

**Stay connected**—Get the latest neighborhood information and event updates by following the Highland District Council on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.

## Macalester-Groveland

[macgrove.org](http://macgrove.org) • 651-695-4000

**Shop locally this holiday season**—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council and Macalester College's High Winds Fund are encouraging customers to patronize small local businesses this holiday season. Between now and December 19, those who make three purchases from Macalester-

Groveland businesses may enter a drawing to win one of five \$100 gift cards. Full entry details and a guide with local gift ideas are available on the website.

**Show your neighborhood pride**—Locally designed Macalester-Groveland T-shirts can now be ordered online for home delivery. The shirts come in kiwi, heather indigo and dark heather in a variety of sizes. Visit [macgrove.org/tshirt](http://macgrove.org/tshirt).

**Join the snow team**—Volunteers are needed to help keep the community council's organics recycling drop-off site on Grand Avenue free from snow and ice this winter. Volunteers can expect to shovel two or three times during the season, or fewer if enough people sign up. Learn more or register by emailing [mgcc@macgrove.org](mailto:mgcc@macgrove.org).

**Upcoming meetings**—There are no council board or committee meetings in December. To receive monthly meeting notices, sign up at [macgrove.org/participate](http://macgrove.org/participate).

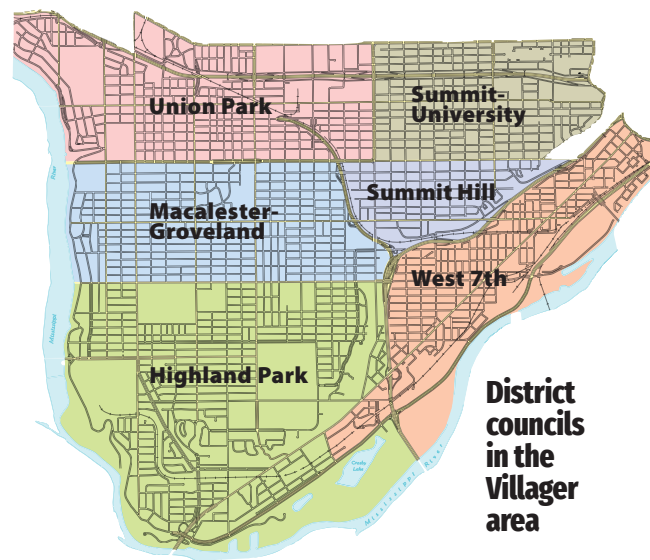
**Office closed**—The community council office remains closed. Email [mgcc@macgrove.org](mailto:mgcc@macgrove.org) for more information.

## Union Park

[unionparkdc.org](http://unionparkdc.org) • 651-645-6887

**Helping the homeless**—The Union Park District Council is expressing solidarity with the many local people who are without shelter at this time. Numerous homeless encampments have sprung up across Union Park's neighborhoods, most prominently at Snelling Avenue and I-94. The UPDC is working to help ensure that the homeless have the resources they need. The Saint Paul Camps Hub ([linktr.ee/StpCampsHub](http://linktr.ee/StpCampsHub)) will connect people to different sources to donate and get in touch with those who are coordinating those efforts. An Amazon wish list ([tinyurl.com/y6hj8wnf](http://tinyurl.com/y6hj8wnf)) has been assembled for another Union Park encampment. The UPDC is also encouraging people to join Hamline Midway Neighbors Helping Homeless Neighbors ([tinyurl.com/yys3ur6p](http://tinyurl.com/yys3ur6p)) on Facebook.

**Park improvements**—The Union Park District Council's Environment and Parks Committee makes recommendations for the use of city park funds for both capital improvements



and programs. Those who see a need at their neighborhood park can help make it better by filling out a funding request at [tinyurl.com/y24zvvg2](http://tinyurl.com/y24zvvg2).

**Upcoming online meetings**—Transportation Committee, on Monday, December 14; Environment and Parks Committee on Wednesday, December 16; Committee on Land Use and Development on Monday, December 21; and Neighborhood Involvement Committee on Monday, December 28. All meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. To access the meetings, email [wako@unionparkdc.org](mailto:wako@unionparkdc.org) or click on the links found at [unionparkdc.org/calendar](http://unionparkdc.org/calendar).

**COVID-19 resources**—Union Park neighbors who need assistance or information related to the coronavirus are invited to call the UPDC office, visit its website or email [info@unionparkdc.org](mailto:info@unionparkdc.org).

**Stay in contact**—The public is invited to "like" the Union Park District Council on Facebook, follow it on Twitter at @UnionParkDC, and subscribe to its e-newsletter, "Neighborhood Matters," by emailing [info@unionparkdc.org](mailto:info@unionparkdc.org).

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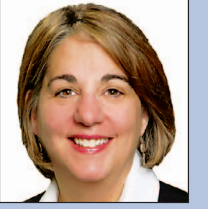
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