

## Christmas wishes come true through the intercession of many Giving Trees

By Anne Murphy

The holidays can be a difficult time for people in need. For the past three decades, Catholic Charities has conducted a Giving Tree program to provide some measure of comfort and joy to families and adults who are struggling with poverty. Last year more than 20,000 people were helped through Giving Trees at more than 20 churches, businesses and schools across the Twin Cities, according to Gretchen Olmscheid, the organization's warehouse and procurement specialist.

Catholic Charities does not have a final tally of Giving Trees this year, since sponsors are still coming forward. Among the local organizations sponsoring trees are Nativity Catholic Church at 1938 Stanford Ave., Mancini's Char House at 531 West Seventh St. and the InterContinental Saint Paul Riverfront at 11 E. Kellogg Blvd.

Giving Trees are decorated with ornamental tags that note specific items needed by a Catholic Charities client, such as mittens, winter hats, stockings, underwear or personal hygiene products. Donors pick an ornament off the tree, purchase the item on the tag and drop the gift off at the tree location or at Catholic Charities Distribution Center, 341 Chester St.

This is the fifth year Nativity has hosted a Giving Tree, according to Julie Talens Paske of Macalester-Groveland, current chair of the program at the church. "It's



Julie Talens Paske trims the Giving Tree at Nativity Church with ornamental tags. Parishioners take a tag and return with a gift for the financially strapped clients of Catholic Charities. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

a project of the parish's Council of Catholic Women," she said.

The number of ornaments decorating Nativity's Giving Tree has increased from year to year, according to Talens Paske. In

2018, 60 ornaments were hung from the tree. That number rose to 200 in 2019 and 2021. This year there were 150 ornaments already by the end of Novem-

GIVING TREES ▶3

## Hidden River set for \$54M upgrade

### Debate centers on new look along Summit Ave.

By Jane McClure

A \$54 million renovation and expansion project at Hidden River Middle School, 1700 Summit Ave., will get underway in summer 2024 and wrap up by fall 2025. During construction, middle school students will attend classes at the former Wilson School building at 631 N. Albert St. in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood.

The Macalester-Groveland Community Council's Housing and Land Use Committee got its first look at the renovation plans on November 30. Saint Paul Public Schools project manager Vaughn Kelly and architect Paul Lawton from DLR Group outlined the plans for Hidden River, which was known for many years as Ramsey.

The school's redesign should be done by the end of the year. Construction documents will be prepared between February and May 2023, and bids will be sought beginning in June.

Meanwhile, work 2 miles away at Wilson will take place during the 2023-2024 school year to prepare it for use as a middle school. Wilson most recently housed the LEAP Academy for English language learners. LEAP is moving to the former John A. Johnson Elementary School in the Payne-Phalen neighborhood next fall.

HIDDEN RIVER RENOVATION ▶5

## Native son Axel Henry takes the helm of Saint Paul's Police Dept.

### Expectations are high for 24-year veteran of force

By Frank Jossi

Axel Henry, Saint Paul's new chief of police, has deep roots in the city. A 24-year veteran of the Saint Paul Police Department, he lives on the West End and grew up in Macalester-Groveland, in homes on Lincoln Avenue and Vernon Street that were close enough to ride his bike to his father's office at Macalester College.

Henry is the son of former Macalester College English professor Harley Henry. Through his father, he met "smart people from every background, race and culture," he said. "My dad hosted students from all over the place at the house. That was a big influence on me."

Henry attended Webster Magnet (now Barack and Michelle Obama) Elementary School and Central High School. "Webster was hugely important to my upbringing," he said.

His parents divorced early in Henry's life, and his father raised him and his two sisters as a single parent. His mother suffered

from alcoholism and depression, he said, and she moved back to her native Denmark before her death.

Henry graduated from Central in 1987. "I wasn't the greatest student or athlete," he said, but he went on to the University of Saint Thomas where he majored in business administration and accounting. He worked in the city's Parks and Recreation Department to help pay for his tuition.

After graduating from Saint Thomas, Henry realized that working behind a desk did not suit him. A friend in the Parks and Rec Department had gone on to become a police officer, and he suggested Henry

check out the profession. He liked what he saw.

"I finally figured out that what I was looking for (in a career) was service," Henry said, "serving something bigger than myself. That's exactly what you find in law enforcement. I feel blessed that I stumbled into it."

Henry, 54, began his six-year term as police chief in mid-November, following his appointment by Mayor Melvin Carter and his confirmation by the City Council. He succeeds interim Police Chief Jeremy

AXEL HENRY ▶2

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1- AXEL HENRY

Ellison, who replaced Chief Todd Axtell when he stepped down in June at the end of his six-year term.

Henry joined the Saint Paul Police Department in 1998, after three years in the Roseville Police Department, and quickly rose from patrol officer to sergeant to commander of the department's Central District. As senior commander of the Eastern District from 2016-19—the busiest of the city's three police districts—he oversaw a staff of 105 uniformed and civilian employees. Now as chief, he oversees a department of about 800 employees.

Ward 3 City Council member Chris Tolbert said he voted for Henry's confirmation as chief because of his long tenure in the department and his progressive, data-driven approach to policing. Henry's broad experience within the department and the "bank of trust" he has built in Saint Paul are major assets for a chief, according to Tolbert. "Obviously, it's a big role," he said. "We've had a long line of great police chiefs, and I think Henry's got the ability to be the next great one."

Henry faces many challenges as chief of police in the state's second largest city. Recruiting and retaining police officers remains a "massive" problem, he said, one the city shares with communities across the United States. Saint Paul is authorized to have as many as 619 officers, but its force now stands at 576.

Henry sees the recent increase



Saint Paul's new chief of police Axel Henry (left) was introduced by Mayor Melvin Carter at the Saint Paul Police Academy's graduation ceremony, held on December 1 in the O'Shaughnessy Educational Center at the University of Saint Thomas. There, the new recruits (right) waited to have their badges pinned on by Chief Henry.

PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

in gun violence as perhaps the biggest challenge he faces. Saint Paul had 38 homicides in 2021. Thirty of those murders were from gunfire, and another 235 people were injured by firearms. Those are all record numbers currently, but they will likely be surpassed in 2022.

Henry said he hopes to develop a public safety model for reducing gun violence with help from social service providers and citizens. "We want a solution that will work for everyone," he said. "These are big problems, but there are great opportunities for us to develop new strategies and

ways to work together as a community to bring about the kind of changes we want."

Prior to becoming chief, Henry helped launch ASPIRE (A Saint Paul Intervention & Recovery Effort), the Police Department's response to the Project PEACE initiative launched by the city's new Office of Neighborhood Safety. Project PEACE aims to deter violence through evidence-based programs and partnerships with civic leaders, social service agencies, employers and law enforcement.

The chief believes that ASPIRE and Project PEACE will work to

reduce violence through "prevention, intervention and enforcement," he said. The programs are designed to reach potential offenders and redirect them before they commit crimes.

Henry displays a photograph of Martin Luther King Jr. in his office. Though he grew up in a family that was not all that religious, his parents were committed to the social justice causes championed by the late civil rights leader. Henry has displayed the photograph throughout his career as a reminder that law enforcement must be devoted to civil rights and social justice.

Henry makes his home in the Little Bohemia area north of the High Bridge. While looking for a new house several years ago, he noticed a vacant lot off of West Seventh Street and asked his Realtor to investigate it. The lot had been sold, Henry learned, but when the new owner failed to show up for the closing, Henry bought it. He then worked with an architect on building a new house for him and his life partner, Mikeya Griffin, who is the executive director of the Rondo Community Land Trust.



  
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This year's chair of Nativity of Our Lord's Giving Tree effort, Julie Talens Paske attaches the gift requests of Catholic Charities clients to the evergreen set up in the back of the Macalester-Groveland church.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

**14 GIVING TREES**

ber, she said.

Parishioners invariably pick the Giving Tree clean of ornaments, according to Talens Paske. "Families will stop by the tree after Mass, discuss the items needed and decide which they want to give," she said. "People bring the unwrapped items back to church with the ornamental tag attached and put them under the tree."

Talens Paske has used the Giving Tree as a way to get her children involved in volunteering. "They assist from start to finish," she said. "They help put up the tree, hang the ornaments, deliver the gifts to Catholic Charities and take down the tree. The Giving Tree can be a conversation starter, helping children recognize that there are people in our community who don't have some of the basic goods that most of us are accustomed to. Buying a brand new item for someone can be that person's Christmas gift, and doesn't it feel good to give to others?"

Pat Mancini, who with his brother John owns Mancini's Char House, said that they are happy to be partnering with Catholic Charities this holiday season. "We have many patrons who ask if we know any people who need help during the holidays," he said. "This is perfect for that. So many people are in the giving mood this time of year, especially after COVID. We've been on West Seventh since 1948. We're dedicated to this community, which has been so good to us, and we've had experience with (Catholic Charities') Dorothy Day Center."

Mancini's Giving Tree is located in the lower lounge area. Throughout December, "we'll help explain to patrons what the Giving Tree is about," Mancini said.

"Sponsoring the Giving Tree is an important thing for my children to see—the value in giving rather than receiving," said Trisha Mancini-Ketchmark, daughter of Pat Mancini and the Char House's banquet and event manager. "It was also important for my father to have his children see Man-

*"Catholic Charities and the people they serve are our neighbors. Our organization wants to be active in making the neighborhood and the city better."*

cini's doing events such as this that give back to a community that has always been there for us."

The InterContinental, which is also marking its first year as a partner of Catholic Charities, has three Giving Trees with a total of 600 ornamental gift tags. The trees are located on the hotel's lower level, in the main lobby and in a second-floor room that connects to the skyway system, according to Leah Wellnitz, director of sales and marketing.

Giving Trees are part of the InterContinental's commitment to supporting local charities and the community as a whole, Wellnitz said. "Both the InterContinental Saint Paul and the Double Tree by Hilton Downtown are now managed by Maada-dizi Investments and locally owned and operated by the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe," she said. "Catholic Charities and the people they serve are our neighbors. Our organization wants to be active in making the neighborhood and the city better."

Catholic Charities will be hosting a 30th anniversary celebration of the Giving Tree program on December 17 and 18 in Macy's Court at the Mall of America. There, individuals and families can pick an ornament off a Giving Tree, purchase the gift at the mall and drop it off at the tree.

For information on sponsoring a Giving Tree, call Elizabeth Lyden of Catholic Charities at 612-204-8582. For more information on the program or to fulfill a gift request online, visit [cctwincities.org/our-organization/events/giving-tree](http://cctwincities.org/our-organization/events/giving-tree).

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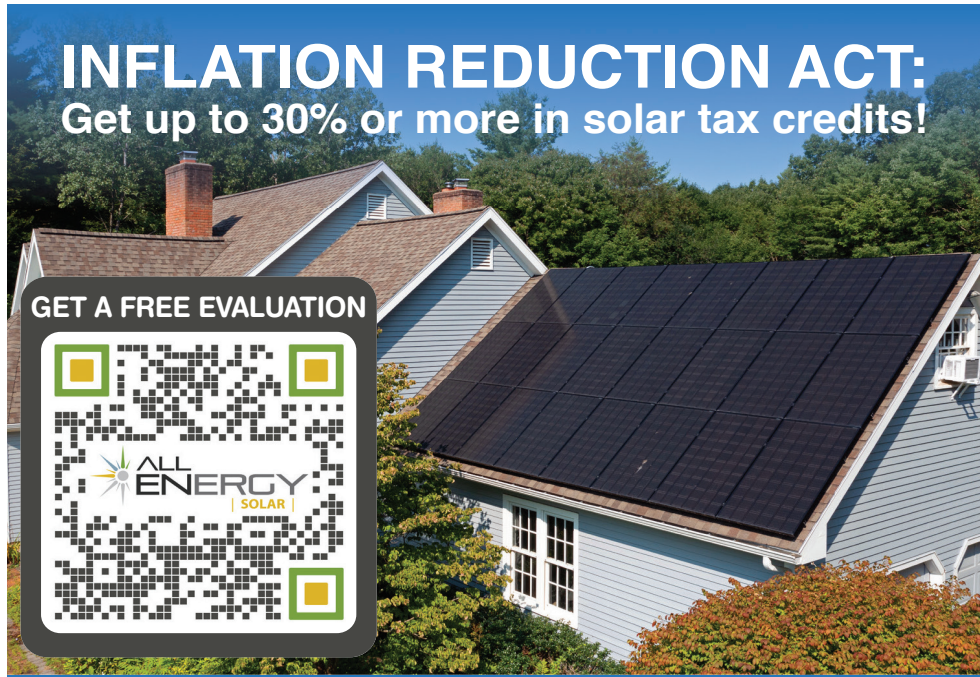
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# County gets earful at recent truth hearing over rising property taxes

By Jane McClure

Before the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners adopts its 2023 budget on December 13, it will review dozens of comments submitted online and at its annual truth-in-taxation hearing on November 28 that drew more than 50 people to the Roseville Library and another 50-plus people online.

More than 30 people testified during the hearing. That included many from Saint Paul neighborhoods where property values have been rapidly rising since the 2008 recession.

The county has proposed a 4.54 percent increase in its property tax levy for 2023 to support a \$785.4 million budget. It is also planning to increase its Regional Rail Authority levy by 2.7 percent—from \$29.6 million this year to \$30.41 million in 2023. The county's Housing and Redevelopment Authority levy would also rise by 2.7 percent—from \$11.1 million to \$11.4 million.

Several people testifying from East Side and suburban neighborhoods cited double-digit property tax increases, and questioned whether they could stay in their longtime homes. Young homeowners also spoke out.

Jessica Kissel bought her first home in late 2020 in the Summit-University neighborhood. She carefully researched property tax history before buying her home, but was shocked when her property taxes increased 41 percent her first year and have continued to rise.

"Had I known, I would've thought things through differently," Kissel said.

Donna Little has lived in the Hamline-Midway neighborhood for almost half a century and has seen the greatest increases in taxes and home value over the past few years. "My problem with this is our services haven't increased," she said.

Several speakers said they cannot afford to retire when their property taxes

rise above and beyond what their incomes will bear. North End resident Tou Moua Lee said his taxes have risen well over 100 percent since buying his house a few years ago. "I'm turning 65 and I've barely enough to retire," Lee said.

Phalen area resident Gary Johnson said he has seen the property taxes on his small house increase by 130 percent over the past four years, most recently rising 28.1 percent. Johnson, a senior citizen, expressed concern for others. "This is going to be a real burden for first-time homeowners," he said.

When comparing Saint Paul's 17 planning districts, the Payne-Phalen neighborhood will see the greatest percentage increase in its median-value home over the past year—from \$194,500 to \$234,900, or 20.8 percent. Property taxes on that home would increase from \$2,829 to \$3,401 next year, or 20.2 percent.

MyVillager area neighborhoods vary greatly in changes to their median-value homes next year—from a 12.6 percent increase in Macalester-Groveland to a 1.2 percent decrease in downtown.

Saint Paul's median-value home is \$266,300 for taxes payable in 2023, up from \$228,700. The property taxes on that home, if the city, county and school district adopt their maximum levies, would increase from \$3,418 to \$3,924 or 14.8 percent.

County Board chair Trista MatasCastillo empathized with those facing large property tax increases and said that increasing the levy is not an easy decision. She urged people to apply for programs that can provide property tax breaks. Those include homeowners' homestead credit refund programs, a regular property tax refund and a special refund program. There is also a tax deferral program for senior citizens.

More information on property tax refunds and deferrals is available by visiting [tinyurl.com/3dsfa8aa](http://tinyurl.com/3dsfa8aa).

# Businesses may see 8% fee increase

By Jane McClure

The fees charged for many permits and licenses in Saint Paul would increase by 8 percent next year under a proposal that is poised for adoption by the City Council on December 7. The increases will be the subject of a public hearing before the City Council in January. Notices to affected businesses will be sent out soon.

City staff say they have not heard any complaints about the proposed increases. The 8 percent hike is expected to raise an additional \$1.32 million for the city's general fund. City staff say the increases are needed to cover the costs of city services.

The city increased its fees for many permits and licenses by 1.5 percent in 2022. Still, several business groups and individual business owners protested that increase at a public hearing earlier this year. With the impact of COVID-19 and its related restrictions and mandates on businesses, one oft-heard sentiment was that any increase was too much.

Last January, the city began requiring establishments that serve alcohol to screen patrons for proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test within the previous 72 hours. Although that requirement was later rescinded, it came with increased costs on businesses. The city refunded some of those costs for more than 300 businesses earlier this year, according to Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) director Angie Wiese.

Wiese succeeded Ricardo Cervantes

earlier this year. Her first budget as DSI director in 2023 is proposed at \$19.8 million. That is up \$1.46 million or 8 percent from 2022.

Wiese described the other city fees that are being considered for different levels of increase in 2023. For example, a new stepped approach is being considered for vacant building registration fees.

Owners of vacant buildings are required to register the buildings with the city. The city has about 400 registered vacant buildings. Typically, about 14 buildings are removed from that list and 14 are added to that list each month. DSI is proposing that the owners of vacant buildings that are kept in better condition pay a lower registration fee than those whose buildings need more oversight and upkeep. That stepped approach would raise another \$100,000 for the city, she said.

Fire certificate of occupancy fees, which were increased by 12 percent in 2022, face another increase in 2023. A 4 percent increase is proposed for smaller residential buildings. An 8 percent increase is proposed for larger residential buildings (100-plus units) and for commercial buildings. One argument DSI has long made for the increases is that the fees do not cover all of the costs related to fire certificate of occupancy inspections. These fee increases would raise more than \$70,000 altogether.

Other fee increases are proposed for sound level variances, gas station licenses and rental halls. These increases would raise more than \$12,000 in 2023.



# District's five-year plan includes many more local school remodels

By Jane McClure

**H**idden River Middle School is not the only local program of the Saint Paul Public Schools with construction plans in the works. A November update for the School Board showed renovations are underway or wrapping up on other area schools. The district's five-year capital plan for 2023-2027 also outlines several other school renovation projects coming up.

The capital plan, developed almost a decade ago by a community task force, was first approved by the School Board in 2015. It is routinely reviewed and amended as needed. Several area schools have already had work completed, including Adams Spanish Immersion Elementary, the upper and lower campuses of Global Arts Plus, Highland Park Elementary and Horace Mann Elementary.

Here's a look at the local schools with construction work recently finished, in progress or starting soon:

- **Jie Ming Mandarin Immersion**, 1845 Sheridan Ave. A \$26.84 million renovation

project has begun at Jie Ming, formerly Homecroft, and is scheduled to be done by fall. It includes a kitchen and cafeteria addition, five new classrooms, improved restrooms and a new gym floor. A new heating and cooling system is planned for the west wing. Outside, traffic flow will be improved with reconfigured vehicular access.

- **Bridge View School**, 350 Colborne St. Roof replacement was completed this fall at Bridge View, which serves special education students in grades K-12. Work was budgeted at \$5 million, but the costs came in closer to \$3 million. The school is penciled in for future renovations, with design work starting in 2027.

- **Barack and Michelle Obama Elementary**, 707 Holly Ave., is scheduled to close at the end of this school year. Remodeling will follow and is scheduled to be finished by fall 2024 or 2025. The building, which was originally built as a junior high, will accommodate a preK-5 Montessori program and a middle school. The costs for this work and other upcoming projects have not been finalized.

- **Highland Park Middle School**, 975

S. Snelling Ave. Work is expected to take place between 2023-2026 and includes renovation of the first-floor restrooms, kitchen, cafeteria, some learning spaces and administrative offices. A new entry would be created, and lockers and lighting would be replaced. The parking lot would also get some attention.

- **Highland Park Senior High**, 1015 S. Snelling Ave., would also benefit from the middle school kitchen and cafeteria work. Theater lighting, new athletic flooring and a new fire alarm system are planned. New artificial turf fields are proposed at the school's athletic complex, along with softball and baseball dugout improvements, and resurfacing of the track.

- **Central High School**, 275 N. Lexington Pkwy. Griffin Stadium is set for electrical work to be completed in 2023, and locker room renovations in 2024. The high school has upcoming window replacement, science room upgrades and other work over the next few years.

- **Rondo Education Center**, 560 Concordia Ave., which houses the Benjamin Mays IB World and Capitol Hill Magnet schools.

Improvements slated for 2023-2027 include replacing the gym floor, ceilings, some flooring, walls and playground.

- **Gordon Parks High School**, 1212 University Ave., is to have fire alarm and security improvements in 2023.

- **Journeys Secondary School**, 90 S. Western Ave., is scheduled for roof replacement in 2023-2024.

- **Randolph Heights Elementary**, 348 S. Hamline Ave., has boiler replacement, fire suppression system work and gym floor replacement projects spread over 2023-2025.

- **Groveland Park Elementary School** and the Groveland Recreation Center, 2045 Saint Clair Ave., are set for several projects in 2023-2024. That includes work on the roof and fire alarm system, replacement of the north parking lots and drainage correction.

- **Expo for Excellence Elementary**, 540 Warwick St., has fire safety improvements penciled in for 2025, and partial roof replacement in 2027.

- **Four Seasons A-Plus Elementary**, 318 Moore St., is to have its playground replaced in 2026.

## 1◀ HIDDEN RIVER RENOVATION

"Students will spend one year at Wilson, and then will be back at Hidden River," Kelly said.

The oldest part of the Hidden River building was constructed in 1926, with additions built in the 1970s and 1990s. Much of the debate on November 30 centered on changes on the Summit side of the school, where a new two-story glass addition will create a secure building entrance and house administrative offices.

Plans call for moving the current school parking lot along Grand to the green space at Summit and Cambridge Street, and turning the current parking lot into a sports court. Bike parking would be near the new lot. Much of the limestone retaining wall along the school's Summit side would be removed.

The new entrance and removal of the retaining wall were questioned by committee members Marc Manderscheid and Jack Fei. They said the new architecture would not fit with Summit's historic character. Fei said the design would clash with the building's existing brick exterior. Manderscheid called placement of a new parking lot along Summit a "desecration."

Other committee members said they liked the site plan and design of the building addition, and that moving the parking lot away from Grand made sense. Be-



Pictured above is the new Summit Avenue entrance being proposed as part of the \$54 million renovation and expansion of Hidden River Middle School. At right is a closer look at the solar fins being suggested on a new two-story glass addition on the Summit side of the school.



cause the school is in the Summit Avenue West Historic District, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission will have to approve the plans. The HPC is expected to discuss the addition on December 19.

The current school is 82,322 square feet, and plans call for 9,613 square feet of new space. Lawton and Kelly explained that the school would be renovated throughout. Along with the two-story addition, the project will include creating more flexible class-

room spaces, relocating lockers and providing teacher prep areas. The south entrance to the building would be closed off.

The work will also include renovating the kitchen, creating new restrooms, updating the gym and

cafeteria, and moving the media center to the basement, which will also be renovated.

HVAC, electrical and other systems will be replaced, along with windows. A geothermal heating and cooling system will be in-

stalled. The west parking lot will be improved, and part of the roof will be replaced.

Learn more about the construction project, including a photo gallery, by visiting [spps.org/hid-denriver-builds](https://spps.org/hid-denriver-builds).

# Happy Holidays

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# BZA allows more signs at Sibley Plaza with new brewery, restaurant on way

By Jane McClure

Sibley Plaza owner Paster Properties secured a sign variance from the Saint Paul Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) on November 28 to accommodate a new brewery, new restaurant and possibly other businesses moving into the shopping center at 2401 W. Seventh St.

The center is allowed up to 1,788.60 square feet of total signage under its commercial zoning and street frontage. However, it was requesting 2,302.74 square feet to accommodate the new tenants.

Under the city's sign regulations, Sibley Plaza is considered to be a corner lot on West Seventh and Davern streets. In such cases, the street frontage with the shortest width is used as part of a formula to determine the amount of signage allowed.

David Eide of the BZA staff recommended approval of the variance, saying that both of Sibley Plaza's buildings face West Sev-



A rendering from Paster Properties of the patio for the new Wandering Leaf Brewing Company and Soul Lao restaurant that are coming to Sibley Plaza this spring.

enth and not Davern, and that the businesses are 150-240 feet from the street. The Highland District Council (HDC) also supported the variance.

"We'd like to be governed as if West Seventh Street is our only frontage," said Paster spokesperson John Kohler. "All tenants face West Seventh."

The shopping center has 11 empty spaces, including a large

space recently vacated by Family Dollar store. Plans discussed earlier this fall with the HDC Community Development Committee called for Wandering Leaf Brewing Company and Soul Lao restaurant to share that space. The businesses plan to open next spring.

The Laotian restaurant is transitioning from a food truck to a brick-and-mortar operation. It

is owned by Eric Phothisanh and Sabrina Boualaphanh, and will mainly offer carryout and food service for Wandering Leaf.

Wandering Leaf is a new operation owned by Rob Reisdorf and Matt Holton. The HDC submitted a letter of support for a tap room and entertainment licenses for the business.

Plans reviewed with the HDC show patios on either side of the

area between the main shopping center and its smaller building. Earlier on November 28, Paster obtained city staff site plan approval for the patio that will be closest to the CP Rail tracks.

One goal for the area is to be able to cone off the traffic between the two buildings and use the space for events.

Much of the BZA debate was technical in nature, focusing on past and present sign plans for Sibley Plaza. BZA members and Kohler discussed at length how various amounts of signage would be allocated.

Eide and Assistant City Attorney Peter Warner said the BZA needed to look at the variance request as a whole and not how much signage would be used for each business. "The allocation of signage is a function of what the landlord and the tenants negotiate," Warner said.

The BZA vote is final unless it is appealed to the Saint Paul City Council within 10 days.

# Fire Department seeks more staff, supplies to keep up with increasing calls

By Jane McClure

Heightened demand for medical services and increasing medical supply costs are driving changes in the Saint Paul Fire Department. Its 2023 budget, which the City Council is poised to adopt on December 7, includes funding for six more basic life support (BLS) staff and more medical supplies.

Fire Chief Butch Inks outlined the changes in requests for service in a presentation before the City Council this fall. Saint Paul has had firefighters who double as emergency medical personnel since 1972. Over the year, the department has seen a shift in responding to more calls for emergency medical service (EMS) than for fire and rescue.

Run volume has increased 64 percent over the past decade, with a 69 percent increase in EMS calls, a 32 percent increase in residential fire calls and an 82 percent increase in other calls for service. The rising

*"One thing I was told is that private care facilities call 911 to have (firefighters) help put people back into bed," Inks said.*

call load has been handled with just a 1.8 percent increase in staff.

Help with the medical calls will come with the addition of the six full-time BLS staff. The fire department launched its BLS units in 2013 to handle less-intensive medical calls and transports. BLS 911 service was added in 2019. Since then the units have handled more than 10,000 calls.

Adding more BLS staff will provide seven-day-a-week coverage and an additional nine shifts. Inks said the added revenue gained from BLS calls should meet or exceed the costs of hiring more staff. The added budget amount is \$403,520.

Implementation of the BLS units had

lowered the average EMS response time by almost one minute, Inks said. BLS units also create a career path for workers who want to become firefighters.

The added medical calls come with costs, including the need for more supplies. The fire department is seeking an additional \$100,000 for medical supplies next year.

Another potential revenue generator to be added next year is for the fire department to charge for calls to care facilities when help is needed for a patient due to no-lift or minimal lift policies. Inks learned of the issue when he visited all of the city fire stations to talk to firefighters recently.

"One thing I was told is that private care facilities call 911 to have (firefighters) help put people back into bed...knowing that we'll show up every time," Inks said.

His budget proposes a \$350 fee for each call. Inks said the department gets about 1,200 calls annually for this service.

Council president Amy Brendmoen said she was "shocked" to hear of such requests

for service, but added that the costs need to be covered somehow.

Council members reviewed the numbers and the history of how runs or calls for service have changed over the past decade.

In 2013 the call volume was 29,578 for EMS, and 8,991 for fire and rescue with a sworn staff of 433. By 2019 calls increased to 37,954 for EMS, 960 for BLS 911, and 11,178 for fire and rescue with a staff of 435. In 2021, calls rose to 40,371 for EMS, 4,382 for BLS 911, and 12,635 for fire and rescue with a staff of 430.

Projections for 2023 show a call volume of 45,010 for EMS, 4,748 for BLS 911, and 13,463 for fire and rescue. Staffing would be at 444, with the addition of six BLS staff and two fire investigators.

The fire budget is proposed at \$74.5 million from the general fund and just over \$7.5 million from special funds. The special funds budget has remained largely flat since 2022, while the general fund budget increased 5.5 percent.

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# VIEWPOINT

## This serious cyclist is pumped about plan for Summit Ave. trail

By Andy Singer

I take issue with Patrick Contardo and Robyn Roslak's assertion that parking-protected, off-street bike paths of the type proposed for Summit Avenue are "untested" and "unproven" ("Summit Ave. trail plan overlooks needs of serious cyclists," *MyVillager* Viewpoint, November 23).

One-way, parking-protected and separated bikeways are the backbone of urban bike networks in many U.S. cities, including New York (which has dozens), Boston, Chicago and San Francisco. Protected bike paths have been installed in these cities for at least a decade, and they have been found to be safer than on-street bike lanes in areas with high motor-vehicle traffic. Their use has been codified into the street design guidelines used by the Federal Highway Administration and the National Association of City Transportation Officials. I have biked on such facilities in all of these cities. They are great, comfortable to ride on, and maintained in winter even in New York, Chicago and Boston.

Minneapolis and, to a lesser degree, Saint Paul have built some of these facilities, and they are also great and safe. The new protected, off-street bike path on

Como Avenue from Raymond Avenue to Como Park is enormously popular with folks attempting to access the Transitway, the State Fairgrounds or Como Park. I use it frequently, even during the winter, and I consider myself what the authors call a "serious cyclist."

The authors fret about e-bikes and scooters using the new regional trail, or pedestrians using it in winter "when sidewalks are not cleared of ice and snow." But e-bikes and scooters use Summit's on-street bike lanes now, and east of Lexington Parkway the current bike lanes are useless in winter. So I would rather share a path with a few pedestrians in winter than have nothing and be forced to ride in the middle of the street with cars honking at me and passing within inches.

From talking to staff in the city's Parks and Recreation Department, the Summit Avenue Regional Trail would cost \$12 million, but that is if it were constructed by itself and not as part of a larger street reconstruction project. The proposed off-street paths will most likely be installed as part of larger street reconstruction projects when those happen in the next decade or so. As such, they could end up costing considerably less and be only marginally more expensive than reconstructing the street as is.

I began volunteering on the now-defunct Saint Paul

Bicycle Advisory Board in 2008 and helped form the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition in 2010. I have worked with BikeMN, the Sierra Club, MoveMN and many other groups to try and get safe places for people to ride and walk in this city. I have attended hundreds of meetings and researched and written extensively on bike and pedestrian issues locally and nationally. In those 14 years, I have not seen these two authors at a single city meeting about bikes or bike facilities. Nor have I ever seen them write about such issues before or advocate for bikes in Saint Paul in any way. Now I am supposed to believe they are experts.

Their "solution" would not create a usable winter bike facility, nor would it make the stretch of Summit east of Lexington any better to bike on than it currently is, which is poor. It would also do nothing to reduce crossing distances and improve conditions for pedestrians who are being hit by cars just as often as cyclists. The city's plan for the Summit Avenue Regional Trail addresses those issues. It will produce a safe bikeway that is much more comfortable to use than what is out there now.

*A resident of Macalester-Groveland, Andy Singer is co-chair of the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition.*

### Just repave Summit

I'm an avid, albeit seasonal, bicycle rider. During the warmer months, I find myself on Summit Avenue several times a week. It's my major east-west route to many other trails around the Twin Cities. As such, I find myself in complete agreement with the guest editorial in the November 23 issue of *MyVillager* ("Summit Ave. trail plan overlooks needs of serious cyclists").

I don't know where the impetus to rework the street with some kind of separate bike path is coming from, but I have a simpler solution: Just repave the street. The new blacktop between Snelling Avenue and Lexington Parkway, which was laid down late last year, is marvelous. Just finish the job: Repave the pot-holed, tooth-chipping, rugged, patches-on-patches sections between the Mississippi River and the University Club, and I'll be delighted.

Every time I encounter a bollard-separated, two-way bike trail like the one on Pelham Boulevard, I think, "What a waste." I understand how riding in traffic can intimidate less experienced riders, and I love to see riders of all ages and abilities biking, but there are many streets parallel to Summit—Portland, for instance—that are much safer for families and slower riders.

So save the money and do something that makes sense for everyone, bike riders as well as motorists. Just repave Summit.

*Bob Hartzler  
Highland Park*

### Follow the money

A separate bike trail is likely to be built on Summit Avenue because the Metropolitan Council will not fund an on-street bike lane. What the funder wants, the funder gets.

*Peter Butler  
Summit Hill*

### Rent control vs. rent stabilization

*MyVillager* and other news media in the Twin Cities have been gaslighting their readership about the issue of rent stabilization. I'm disappointed that I have to use the loaded term "gaslighting" to gain attention, but the harm that has been done to the public discussion of rent stabilization is real and ongoing.

Rent control refers to dictating set dollar amounts for rent. Rent stabilization refers to defined percentage increases in rent per year. Saint Paul enacted rent stabilization, not rent control. Using the wrong term distorts the public's understanding of the situation. Rent control connotes dictatorial rules imposed upon landlords. Rent stabilization focuses our attention on affordability for renters, which research has proven results in housing stability.

Saint Paul voters endorsed rent stabilization for tenants. Since the passage of the ordinance, the coverage I

## INBOX

have seen in *MyVillager* and in the majority of news media focuses almost exclusively on other stakeholders in the housing market—developers, investors, landlords and city government—not renters.

General editorial policy has likely weeded out the renters' perspectives because editors insist on printing "new" news. The reactions of the other stakeholders to the passage of the rent stabilization ordinance is new, so their perspectives get aired. But this gives the public the impression that renters' problems have lessened in relation to the others'. This is not true. Articles about inflation and increased demand at charitable food shelves attest to the ongoing hardships of people with lower incomes who primarily rent.

The scarcity of renters' views on this issue is not entirely due to editorial policy. The next most likely inhibitor is self-censorship. The skewed news coverage has not only gaslighted the general public about rent stabilization, it has gaslighted renters into believing that their rent concerns don't matter.

*Wendy Eidukas  
Macalester-Groveland*

### Discouraged by DFL dominance

It sure beats the heck out of me why Minnesota voters elected more DFLers to the state House and Senate, leading to increased doom and gloom, more homelessness and more guaranteed poverty. Democrats have governed and continue to govern by dictatorship, not democracy, and tend not to work for the best interests and financial well-being of we the people.

*Sue Shetka  
Macalester-Groveland*

### For climate resiliency

As a certified flood plain manager with 19 years of experience in civil and water resources engineering, I work directly with Minnesota communities to mitigate the threat of major flooding from heavy rain and other severe weather. Since 2000, there have been 35 weather events in Minnesota that caused more than \$1 billion in damages each, according to the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration. These events hurt businesses, damage private property, strain public infrastructure and threaten public safety and national security.

Many states and municipalities have created chief resilience officer positions to lead efforts to increase resilience to natural disasters. A coordinated resilience strategy helps communities design stronger flood infrastructure, develop smart growth strategies, put limited resources to work and guide emergency responses. However, the federal apparatus around

extreme weather preparedness is disjointed and redundant.

Thankfully, Republicans and Democrats in Congress have come together to introduce the National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act (HR-6461, S-3531). NCARS would establish a federal chief resilience officer to guide the creation and implementation of a national resilience strategy that streamlines federal support, leads with science, leverages nature areas, and addresses historical inequities to help communities mitigate the threat of disasters more efficiently. NCARS would equip local leaders with the resources, data and tools necessary to successfully plan for future risk of flooding and other disasters.

Congress should pass this legislation. Communities across the country will be better off if they do.

*Joe Waln  
Merriam Park*

### Your eyes and the internet

"What's wrong with people?" is a catch phrase used when we notice someone's inexplicable behavior. What is wrong with people? One problem is that we stare at our screens rather than engage in eye-to-eye contact, and text rather than converse. If the eye is a window to the soul, what happens to that soul when it communes with electronic devices more than family?

We carry our precious devices with us wherever we go. They demand our attention and get it. We can hardly imagine life without them. I am not anti-technology. The evolution of the typewriter to the personal computer has been beneficial. But too many people are culpably ignorant of the dangers of the internet. These devices are the tools pornographers use to entrap children into a lifelong addiction to pornography. Young children are especially vulnerable.

Covenant Eyes and the Canopy App are two ways families can protect their loved ones. In addition to apps, there exists a free alternative—ungluing our eyes from our screens by exercising self-control.

*Ann Redding  
Fuller, Minneapolis*

*Editor's note: The writer is president of the Christian Action League of Minnesota.*

### Do write

*MyVillager* welcomes letters to the editor and longer guest editorials. All commentary must be signed, indicate the neighborhood in which the writer lives and include a phone number for verification purposes. Please, send your commentary to *MyVillager*, 241 Cleveland Ave. S., Suite V, Saint Paul, MN 55105, or email it to [letters@myvillager.com](mailto:letters@myvillager.com) or submit it via our website at [myvillager.com/editorial](http://myvillager.com/editorial). The views expressed are not the views of *MyVillager*.





## All the world loves a clown.

Cahoot?! Physical Theatre's Eric William Jones and Emilia Bjork Perkins led youngsters and their parents through the basics of clowning by creating larger-than-life characters at the Highland Park Community Center on November 29. The program was part of the Kaleidoscope series of special events offered by the Saint Paul Public Library.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

# Summit Hill submits draft of new district plan

### Changes affected by development pressure on east end of Grand

By Jane McClure

Guiding future changes in the Summit Hill neighborhood, and along East Grand Avenue in particular, is the focus of Saint Paul's newest draft neighborhood plan. The Summit Hill Association's board of directors voted 10-1 on November 29 to submit its draft plan to city staff for review.

The vote ends one phase of a planning process that began in 2018 and launches a second phase of city review and discussion between SHA and city staff on possible amendments to the plan. If all goes as anticipated, the final plan should win Planning Commission and City Council approval by the end of 2023. The document will also be reviewed by the Metropolitan Council and will become part of the city's comprehensive plan.

"This is an incredible milestone for a volunteer district council," said incoming SHA board president Simon Taghioff.

Saint Paul district councils typically update their neighborhood plans every decade. The plans guide future development and growth, and are used when capital funding is sought.

Summit Hill's current plan dates from 2006. What has complicated changes for the district is development pressure along Grand, and how that is affected by the 2006 East Grand Avenue Overlay District.

The overlay district was put in place to restrict footprints, heights and setbacks for new buildings on the east end of Grand. One focus was to deter the possibility of larger big box retail chains along the street. Concerns were raised at that time about redevelopment impacting Grand's historic character.

The overlay district had the effect of shutting down new development, including a planned mixed-use struc-

ture at Grand and Avon Street. Plans to replace Dixie's on Grand, Saji-Ya and Emmett's Public House at 695 Grand with a new five-story, mixed-use structure came up in 2020 and prompted city officials and neighborhood residents to take a hard look at the overlay district. The new building, called Kenton House, is now under construction.

Work on the district plan was underway when the proposal for 695 Grand was announced. That launched years of work with consultants, neighborhood surveys, focus groups, interviews and reviews of the city's 2040 comprehensive plan. SHA held several public events to seek comments on the plan.

More than a dozen district council volunteers worked on the district plan over the years, said outgoing SHA board president Denise Aldrich. A study called The Future is Grand was unveiled in 2019. Led by the Grand Avenue Business Association and Macalester-Groveland Community Council, the study examined retail trends on the avenue and made recommendations for its future.

A city-led task force is now studying the overlay district and will bring forward recommended changes. Any decisions would be tied to the draft district plan.

Much public engagement wound up earlier this year as volunteers continued writing the draft plan, which was posted on the SHA website in early November.

The draft includes proposed goals for housing, land use, transportation, historic and cultural resources, open spaces, parking and Grand's business environment. It also includes numerous recommendations and references to support city policies and plans.

One key focus is housing, with a goal of preserving and enhancing affordable housing in the neighborhood by promoting a variety of housing types. That includes so-called "missing middle" housing, which is defined as a range of multi-unit buildings that are similar in scale and form to single-family homes.

The SHA is also seeking a balance between preserving historic homes and promoting infill development and zoning changes to increase density. It also wants to promote the addition of accessory dwellings.

Many ideas are suggested for Grand, such as recruiting and retaining a diverse array of small, locally owned businesses that provide a variety of goods and services and serve a range of income levels. Another idea is to fill empty retail spaces, and encourage the short-term use of vacant commercial spaces for pop-up shops. Other ideas include "co-located or collective retail spaces, food trucks, experiential and event-driven retail."

The plan calls for changes to on-street parking to better serve businesses and residents, promoting shared parking, giving priority to on-street spaces with short turnover, and looking at ways to encourage the growing short-term parking needs tied to e-commerce.

Another need is for parking regulation enforcement on Grand and in the neighborhood's residential permit parking districts. Yet another is for less confusing parking signage throughout Summit Hill.

Aldrich acknowledged that work on the district plan "has been a long and tedious process." But she said she is proud of the work district council members have done, and praised efforts to hear as many voices as possible.

The lone dissenting vote on submitting the draft plan to the city came from outgoing board member Sonja Mason, who said that neighbors she represents found the document very long and that it did not reflect their feedback. She also questioned the amount of time allowed to respond to the plan.

Other district council members said they believe the draft plan is inclusive and reflects a wide range of viewpoints.

The neighborhood plan's goals and policies can be viewed at [tinyurl.com/3ncfr7ek](http://tinyurl.com/3ncfr7ek).

# MyVillager

KNOW YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Volume 70, Number 20

Maurice F. Mischke, 1920-1991

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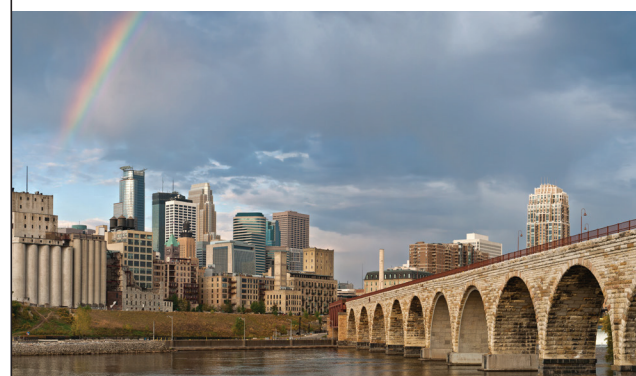
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The five-story Treehouse with 36 units of affordable housing for seniors would be built into the hill behind the Highland Chateau on Saint Paul Avenue and West Seventh Street.

## Committee gives Treehouse senior apartments in Highland a boost up

By Jane McClure

Despite some staunch opposition, the Saint Paul Planning Commission's Zoning Committee recommended approval of plans for Trellis' proposed Treehouse senior apartments on Saint Paul Avenue and West Seventh Street during a public hearing on December 1. The full commission is scheduled to take up the issue on December 9.

The commission will act on three matters. One is a variance for a residential development on a steep slope where significant site grading is needed. The variance also involves a retaining wall that would be as high as 14 feet tall in spots and the creation of a trough-shaped yard between the new building and wall.

The second matter is the project's site plan. Site plans rarely go to the Planning Commission unless the city zoning administrator recommends it or there is an appeal. This site plan went to the Zoning Committee on recommendation of city staff.

The third issue is a change in zoning from single-family residential to medium-density residential.

Trellis is a nonprofit housing provider based in the Twin Cities. It oversees more than 4,000 housing units in 51 properties. At the Highland site, Trellis is planning to build 36 units of low-income housing for seniors. Twenty-seven units would be deeply affordable, with others allocated for elders coming out of homelessness. Units would be studios or one bedroom. Residents will be people living at 30 percent of the Twin Cities area median income, or about \$25,000 per year for a single-person household.

Treehouse has received low-income housing tax credits from the city and \$490,000 from Ramsey County. The total costs of the project have not been announced.

The five-story development would be located behind the Highland Chateau Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center, 2319 W. Seventh St. Residents could use services at Highland Chateau and would also receive services from Catholic Charities. The site would be accessed from a private street that loops behind Highland Chateau.

Dan Walsh of Trellis said that while the sloping site is challenging, "the location for us is key," since it will provide apartments for seniors in a space where they can access services, shopping and transit. "This will fill an important need for housing," he said.

Blufftop neighbors along Lower Saint Dennis Road have criticized the project.

Rick Johnson called the proposal "extreme" and questioned potential project expenditures on a retaining wall and drainage instead of low-income housing itself.

Jolene Cutshall said she and her family will be able to see the new building from their backyard. She and other neighbors described the five-story building as a "skyscraper" and questioned whether enough is being done to protect the bluff as a natural resource.

The Highland District Council recommended approval of the project. The HDC and its Community Development Committee have discussed the project since 2020. The Planning Commission received half a dozen letters opposing the project, including one with 17 signatures.

The developers contend that they are taking proper measures to prepare the site and build, and that the building's roof will not be visible from homes atop the bluff.

The project is complex, with numerous technical reports required before construction can begin. It has involved outside agencies, including the Capital Region Watershed District. Final traffic reports and an engineering report on slope stability and hydrology are pending.

The site plan and variance have more than a dozen conditions between them. The Zoning Committee hearing was almost three hours long as committee members and city staff debated numerous technical points of the project and the developer's requests.

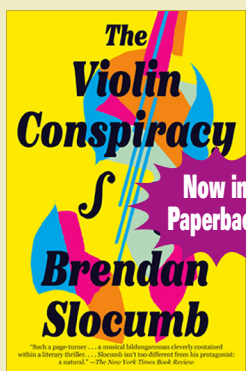
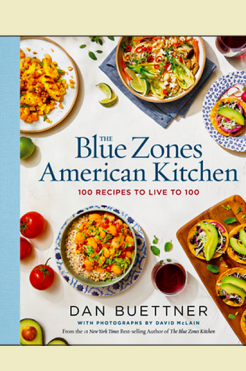
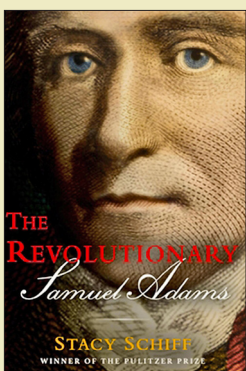
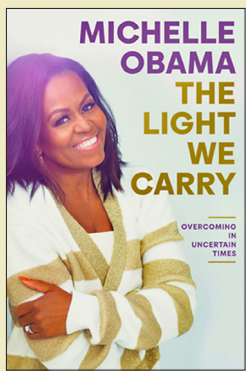
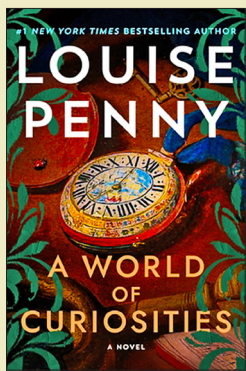
One big concern for committee members was the extent of sloping conditions on the site. Sites with a 12 percent or greater slope require additional city review before construction can begin. The slope on parts of the Treehouse site are 40-70 percent.

Committee chair Jake Reilly questioned whether the site could contain fill from the construction of Highland Chateau more than 50 years ago. Reilly raised that question after looking at an old plat map that showed Madison Street platted about 100 years ago for single-family housing. Developer representatives said they have done soil boring and have not found evidence of fill, though they have found shale.

Site drainage is another issue. The site is being designed with water retention features, including two underground tanks. "Water management is a huge feature of this project," said Ashley Skarda, a member of the city site plan review staff.

Planning Commission approval of the variance and site plan will be final unless appealed to the City Council. The council will take final action on the zoning change.

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# District Councils

## Highland Park

highlanddistrictcouncil.org • 651-695-4005

**Holiday hours**—The Highland District Council’s office will be closed from Monday, December 26, through Monday, January 9.

**Board opening**—The HDC is seeking a candidate to represent Grid 11 on its board of directors from February through April 2023. The position will be up for election at the board meeting on Thursday, February 2. The deadline to apply is January 31. For details, visit the HDC website.

**Workshop presenters sought**—The Highland and Macalester-Groveland district councils are bringing back their home improvement fair next year under the newly titled Home Improvement Workshop Day. Presenters are being sought to give 45-minute to one-hour workshops during the event, which will be held from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, March 11, at Cretin-Derham Hall. For information, visit [macgrove.org/events/hiwd](http://macgrove.org/events/hiwd).

**Western District crime meetings**—The next public meeting to discuss recent crime trends will be held at 9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. Tuesday December 20, at the Saint Paul Police Department’s Western District Office, 389 N. Hamline Ave. Registration is not required. Contact [olivia.sculark@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:olivia.sculark@ci.stpaul.mn.us) or 651-266-5423.

**Upcoming meeting**—Board of directors, 7 p.m. Thursday, January 12. Meetings are held at the Highland Park Community Center, 1978 Ford Pkwy., with the option to join online. Get the Zoom link and meeting agendas at [highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar).

## Macalester-Groveland

macgrove.org • 651-695-4000

**Frost Fest 2023**—The Macalester-Groveland Community Council will hold its annual Frost Fest from 2-5 p.m. Saturday, January 28, at the Groveland Ice Rinks, 2021 Saint Clair Ave. There will be free ice skating, games, hot chocolate, a bonfire and other activities. Visit [macgrove.org/frost-fest](http://macgrove.org/frost-fest) to learn more.

**Join the snow team**—Volunteers are still being sought to help keep the Macalester-Groveland organics recycling drop-off site free from snow and ice this winter. Volunteers can expect to shovel two or three times during the season. Sign up by emailing [mgcc@macgrove.org](mailto:mgcc@macgrove.org).

**Home improvement workshops**—Presenters are being sought for the Macalester-Groveland and Highland district councils newly titled Home Improvement Workshop Day from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday, March 11, at Cretin-Derham Hall. Residents can attend a variety of workshops every hour throughout the day. For more information and an application, visit [macgrove.org/events/hiwd](http://macgrove.org/events/hiwd).

**Mac-Grove pride**—Locally designed Macalester-Groveland T-shirts can still be ordered online and delivered within days. Check [macgrove.org/tshirts](http://macgrove.org/tshirts) for the current availability of sizes and colors.

**Upcoming meetings**—There are no meetings in December. For notices, visit [macgrove.org/participate](http://macgrove.org/participate).

## Summit Hill

summithillassociation.org • 651-222-1222

**Let it snow**—The city of Saint Paul has details on snow emergencies, sidewalk shoveling, on-street parking and more by visiting [stpaul.gov/departments/public-works/street-maintenance/snow-emergency](http://stpaul.gov/departments/public-works/street-maintenance/snow-emergency). The public also can sign up for advanced warnings of snow emergencies via text, e-mail or social media under the “Stay Informed” tab on the city’s webpage.

**Yard and organic waste**—Ramsey County yard waste sites are open from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sundays until April. Free disposal of holiday trees is available at the 1150 Sims Ave. and 1943 Pierce Butler Route sites. The Summit Hill site at 870 Pleasant Ave. does not accept trees or shrubs, but kitchen scraps can be brought there during staffed hours or anytime at the collection site at the Highland Ice Arena, 800 S. Snelling Ave.

**Upcoming event**—board of directors, 7 p.m. Thursday January 12, Linwood Recreation Center. For updated events and participation information, visit [SummitHillAssociation.org/calendar](http://SummitHillAssociation.org/calendar).

## Union Park

unionparkdc.org • 651-645-6887

**Upcoming meetings**—board of directors, 7 p.m. Wednesday, December 7; Transportation Committee, 6:30 p.m. Monday, December 12; Committee on Land Use and Economic Development, 6:30 p.m. Monday, December 19; and Neighborhood Sustainability and Vitality Committee, 7 p.m. Tuesday, December 20. All board meetings will be held on Zoom. To access meetings, email [wako@unionparkdc.org](mailto:wako@unionparkdc.org), [Leah@unionparkdc.org](mailto:Leah@unionparkdc.org), or find the calendar on the website.

**Contact us**—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 [Leah@unionparkdc.org](mailto:Leah@unionparkdc.org).

## West Seventh

fortroadfederation.org • 651-298-5599

**Board notes**—The West Seventh/Ford Road Federation’s board of directors will not meet in December. There are currently four vacancies on the board, including Area I coordinator (two seats), Area III coordinator and treasurer. For details, email [fortroadfed@fortroadfederation.org](mailto:fortroadfed@fortroadfederation.org).

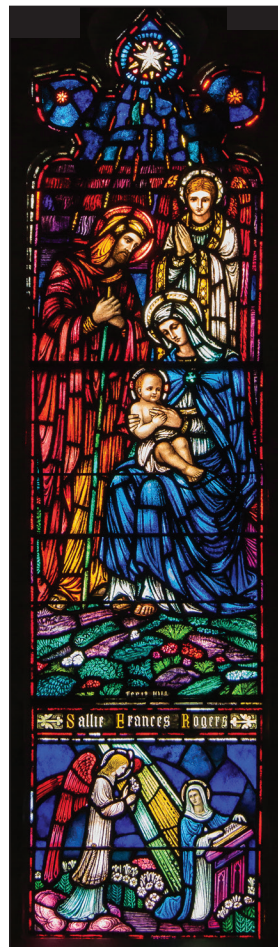
**Holiday Decor Competition**—Nominations are now open for the first Fort Road Federation Holiday Decor Competition. Submit nominations via Google Form at [tinyurl.com/yj4vtc2n](https://tinyurl.com/yj4vtc2n) by December 31. Voting will take place at the January board meeting and the winner will receive a Cossetta’s gift card.

**Please donate**—A hygiene drive benefitting Joseph’s Coat will be conducted from December 14-18. Details can be found on the Fort Road Federation’s website.

**Upcoming meetings**—Transportation and Land Use Committee, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, December 7, at the Fort Road Federation office, 882 W. Seventh St., Suite 6; and Community Engagement and Outreach Committee, 6:30 p.m. Thursday, December 15, via Zoom. For log-in details, visit [fortroadfederation.org/calendar](http://fortroadfederation.org/calendar).



These area churches invite you to worship this Holiday Season!



### CHRISTMAS AT HOUSE OF HOPE

**Saturday, December 24, Christmas Eve**

- 4 p.m. Intergenerational Candlelight Service
- 7 and 9:30 p.m. Carillon Recitals
- 7:30 and 10 p.m. Candlelight Services with The Motet Choir and Orchestra
- Special Music at 10 p.m. only: J.S. Bach’s Christmas Oratorio, Part 3
- Childcare for ages 5 and under at 4 and 7:30 p.m.

Candlelight Services include lessons, carols and anthems.

**Sunday, December 25, Christmas Day**

10 a.m. Worship

Stream at [hohchurch.org](http://hohchurch.org)



The House of Hope Presbyterian Church  
797 Summit Avenue, St. Paul, MN  
(651) 227-6311 | [hohchurch.org](http://hohchurch.org)

# A Seat FOR Every ASS

The manger was full of all kinds of animals: sheep, goats, cows, and asses. No matter which of those you are, Christmas has your name on it. And, after trudging through a pandemic, people deserve a little peace in their lives. So, get yourself to church and let’s do this! Please join us as we celebrate the birth of Christ at one of three Christmas liturgies (also livestreamed at [www.stpaulref.org](http://www.stpaulref.org)):

**Christmas Eve Instant Christmas Pageant for All Ages**  
Saturday, December 24 | 4:00 p.m.

**Christmas Eve Candlelight With Schola and Carols** | 10:30 p.m.

**Christmas Day Festival Eucharist With Schola and Instruments**  
Sunday, December 25 | 10:30 a.m.



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# Crime Report

The following criminal incidents were compiled from Saint Paul and Mendota Heights police reports. For vehicle thefts and other crime reports not mentioned in this print edition, go to MyVillager.com.

## Highland Park

**Burglary**—A residential burglary was reported on the 1300 block of Colby Street between 9:57-10:53 p.m. on November 23.

—Two break-ins were reported at the Highland Bridge development on November 25, including at 6:03 a.m. at 2270 Ford Pkwy., and between 1:35-2:39 p.m. at 850 Mount Curve Blvd.

**Theft**—Several items were reported stolen from vehicles at Crosby Farm Park at 12:30 p.m. on November 15, and at Hidden Falls Park at 2:50 p.m. on November 25.

—A vehicle was reported stolen while the driver was making an Uber Eats delivery on the 1000 block of South Fairview Avenue at 6:22 p.m. on November 16. It was later recovered on the 1800 block of Hampshire Avenue.

—S&S Hardware, 1818 Randolph Ave., reported a theft of items worth more than \$1,000 on November 19-20.

—A U-Haul truck was reported stolen at Seventh Street Storage, 2060 W. Seventh St., at 8:55 p.m. on November 23.

—Items worth more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 1800 block of Bohland Avenue on November 23, on Crosby Farm Road near Davern Street on November 23, and the 700 block of South Cleveland Avenue on November 27.

**Assault**—A woman said she was assaulted at knifepoint by three females at Fort Road Flats, 2242 W. Seventh St., at 11:58 a.m. on November 17.

—An 81-year-old woman was taken to the hospital with minor injuries after being assaulted by a disorderly male on Ford Parkway and Cleveland Avenue at 12:40 p.m. on November 20.

—A 31-year-old man was arrested for trespassing, disorderly conduct, drug possession and assaulting an employee at Yarmo Liquors, 2489 W. Seventh St., at 9:20 p.m. on November 28.

**Weapons**—Two callers reported hearing gunfire on the 900 block of South Wilder Street at 2:39 a.m. on November 20.

—Gun-pointing incidents were reported on West Seventh Street and Snelling

Avenue at 4:49 p.m. on November 21, and on Cleveland Avenue and Ford Parkway at 4:54 p.m. on November 23.

—Threats of violence involving a weapon were reported at Highland Cafe and Bakery, 2012 Ford Pkwy., at 2:19 p.m. on November 22. The suspect also damaged a wall of the restaurant.

## Lexington-Hamline

**Robbery**—A strong-arm robbery was reported near Central High School at 3:17 p.m. on November 17.

**Theft**—An air conditioner was reported stolen at Skyline Tower, 1247 Saint Anthony Ave., at 10:24 a.m. on November 21.

## Macalester-Groveland

**Burglary**—Bicycles were reported stolen from an enclosed porch on the 200 block of Amherst Street on November 19-20.

—Residential burglaries were reported on the 1900 block of Goodrich Avenue at 7:24 p.m. on November 24, and the 1800 block of Wellesley Avenue at 5:41 p.m. on November 26.

**Theft**—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 2100 block of Juliet Avenue on November 18-19, and on the 1300 block of Grand Avenue on November 22.

—Shoplifting thefts at Walgreens, 1585 Randolph Ave., included more than \$500 in items at 3:40 p.m. on November 24, and \$300-\$500 in items at 5:26 p.m. on November 25.

**Assault**—A felony assault with a gun was reported on the 1400 block of Wellesley Avenue at 3:44 p.m. on November 17.

**Miscellaneous**—A red swastika was seen painted on the sidewalk at Mississippi River Boulevard and Princeton Avenue at 4:23 p.m. on November 25.

—A 22-year-old man was arrested for DWI after he parked his vehicle in the middle of the road at Lexington Parkway and Randolph Avenue at 3:57 a.m. on November 27.

## Mendota Heights

**Assault**—A family was reportedly attacked by a woman on the 1300 block of Northland Drive at 12:15 a.m. on November 15. The suspect had to be restrained after trying to physically assault officers. Charges were pending.

**Miscellaneous**—A woman was arrested for DWI after she was found passed out in a running vehicle at a gas pump on the 1200 block of Mendota Heights Road at 6:57 a.m. on November 12.

## Merriam Park

**Theft**—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a vehicle on the 200 block of Otis Avenue at 3:55 p.m. on November 18.

—Two male suspects reportedly shattered a vehicle's window, stole the vehicle, struck another vehicle and then fled the area of Selby and Cretin avenues at 12:13 p.m. on November 21.

**Miscellaneous**—Felony damage to property was reported at the Twin Town treatment center, 1706 University Ave., between 4-5:25 p.m. on November 23.

## Snelling-Hamline

**Burglary**—Around \$4,500 in items were reported stolen from a residence on Snelling and Ashland avenues at 11:26 p.m. on November 26.

**Theft**—A theft of more than \$1,000 was reported at the Holiday Station, 1345 Marshall Ave., at 6:42 p.m. on November 16.

## Summit Hill

**Theft**—A shoplifting loss of more than \$1,000 was reported at Fjallraven, 797 Grand Ave., at 4:10 p.m. on November 15.

—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from two vehicles on the 1000 block of Grand Avenue between 1-8:30 p.m. on November 22.

**Miscellaneous**—A window was found shattered at CVS Pharmacy, 1040 Grand Ave., at 12:15 a.m. on November 29.

## Summit-University

**Burglary**—A break-in was reported at the Gnome Craft Pub, 498 Selby Ave., at 12:15 a.m. on November 20.

—A 48-year-old woman was arrested for breaking into a residence on the 700 block of Marshall Avenue at 8:42 a.m. on November 27.

**Theft**—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from a vehicle on Selby and Western avenues between 5:20-9:15 p.m. on November 22.

**Weapons**—Multiple callers reported gunfire on Kent Street and Marshall Av-

enue at 12:13 p.m. on November 20.

**Assault**—A 28-year-old man was arrested for assaulting a security officer at Saint Paul College at 8:57 p.m. on November 22.

## West End

**Burglary**—An apartment burglary was reported on the 1000 block of Randolph Avenue at 2:52 p.m. on November 19.

—Several items were reported stolen during a break-in at Scrubby's Car Wash, 1900 W. Seventh St., on November 19-20.

—Multiple laptop computers, iPads, homemade weapons and more than 10 World War II handguns were reported stolen during a residential burglary on the 1000 block of Randolph Avenue at 1 a.m. on November 23.

**Theft**—Items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from vehicles on the 500 block of West Seventh Street on November 18, near the Grand Stop Station at 236 Grand Ave. on November 19, and in the parking lot at 212 N. Smith Ave. on November 23-24.

—Thefts of items valued at more than \$1,000 were reported stolen from Science Museum of Minnesota property on the 100 block of West Kellogg Boulevard on November 21-22, and the 200 block of Eagle Parkway on November 22.

**Sex crime**—A 40-year-old man was arrested for indecent exposure after he reportedly was seen naked on West Seventh Street and Kellogg Boulevard at 5:41 p.m. on November 27.

**Assault**—A 33-year-old man was arrested for assaulting a security officer at United Hospital at 10:06 a.m. on November 17.

—A suspect reportedly returned after a verbal altercation at the Saint Paul Tap, 825 Jefferson Ave., and fired shots while driving by the bar at 10:39 p.m. on November 27.

**Kidnapping**—A 42-year-old man was arrested for false imprisonment and felony assault after he reportedly pointed a gun at a woman and would not let her leave an apartment on the 1000 block of Randolph Avenue at 6:09 a.m. on November 19.

**Miscellaneous**—A boy was arrested for damaging the principal's vehicle and threatening officers at Journeys Secondary School, 90 S. Western Ave., at 12:04 p.m. on November 23.

## Catalytic converter thefts are still coming in droves

Catalytic converter thefts continue to fill police reports in Saint Paul and Mendota Heights. Here is a look at 27 catalytic converters reported stolen from vehicles in the two weeks between November 14-28:

**Highland Park**—the 1100 block of South Cleveland Avenue on November 15, the 600 block of South Cleveland on November 16-17, the 1700 block of Bayard Avenue on November 18, and on Race Street and Albion Avenue on

November 21.

**Lexington-Hamline**—on Concordia Avenue and Griggs Street on November 14, on Syndicate Street and Dayton Avenue on November 18, and the 1200 block of Concordia Avenue on November 27-28.

**Macalester-Groveland**—the 1800 block of Berkeley Avenue on November 17-19, the 2200 block of Goodrich Avenue on November 18, the 1400 block of Randolph Avenue on November 20, on Cleveland and Grand avenues on November 22, the 1200 block of Stanford Avenue on November 24, on Fairmount Avenue and Kenneth Street on November 26, on Fairview and James avenues on November 27, and the 1300 block of Juliet Avenue on November 28.

**Mendota Heights**—the 1000 block of Douglas Road on

November 14, and the 1200 block of Northland Drive on November 16.

**Merriam Park**—the 300 block of Fry Street on November 15-16, and the 500 block of Desnoyer Avenue on November 24.

**Summit Hill**—the 600 block of Grand Avenue on November 16-17, and the 700 block of Goodrich Avenue on November 24.

**Summit-University**—the 600 block of Ashland Avenue and the 400 block of Laurel Avenue on November 21, the 100 block of Mackubin Street on November 21-22, and the 800 block of Selby Avenue on November 24.

**West End**—the 700 block of Otto Avenue and the 300 block of James Avenue on November 20.



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My Villager





Flava Coffee and Cafe owner Shaunie Grigsby displays the Sweet Love Pies and an Electric Lady Latte served at her new shop on the northwest corner of University Avenue and Dale Street.

PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

## Gumbo and tacos and burgers, oh my: Chew on these new options in St. Paul

By Carolyn Walkup

**D**iners in neighborhoods served by *MyVillager* have four new restaurants from which to choose with menus that are influenced by the cuisines of the West Indies, Mexico and the good old USA:

### West Indies Soul Food

Owner Sharon Richards-Noel recently reopened West Indies Soul Food at 839 W. University Ave. That is just four blocks from the brick-and-mortar restaurant Richard-Noel closed several years ago. In the interim, she has operated a catering business, a food truck, and food booths at the Midtown Global Market on Lake Street in Minneapolis and in the International Bazaar at the Minnesota State Fair.

Opening her new restaurant almost did not happen due to the \$500,000 needed to build out the space. Richards-Noel accomplished the renovation with help from the city of Saint Paul's Neighborhood Sales Tax Revitalization (STAR) program. The STAR funds, which are derived from the city's half-percent sales tax, subsidized 40 percent of the cost.

The menu at West Indies Soul Food includes such Caribbean cuisine as jerk chicken; chicken curry stew; barbecued pork or beef ribs; Jamaican patties made with either beef, chicken or vegetables; seafood gumbo; and Caribbean-flavored fish or chicken. Patrons may slake their thirst with Richard-Noel's home-brewed but non-alcoholic ginger beer. The dessert menu features such favorites as sweet potato pie, bread pudding and peach cobbler.

Hours are noon-7 p.m. Thursdays through Sundays.

### Flava Coffee and Cafe

Owner Shaunie Grigsby's Flava Coffee and Cafe serves up lattes and other espresso drinks as well as breakfast and lunch at Flava Coffee and Cafe in the new Neighborhood Development Center at 623 W. University Ave. In addition to pleasing local palates, her goal is to help young women of color learn new skills, gain self-confidence and prepare for future careers.

Grigsby invites patrons to spend as much time as they like in the spacious cafe, which is furnished with plush chairs and accented with potted plants. A large shelf offers books for sale, and a Little Free Library is planned.

Grigsby names her beverages after famous black women, such as the Nina Simone (espresso and dark chocolate) and the Octavia Butler (masala chai). Her menu specializes in breakfast and lunch bowls as well as breakfast burritos and Sweet Love Pies. One of those pies is made with scrambled eggs, sausage, cheese and kale, all baked in puff pastry.

Hours are 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Thursdays and 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturdays.

### Burger Press

Burgers, hot dogs and milkshakes are the staples at Burger Press, 718 S. Cleveland Ave. The quick-service restaurant opened in the fall in the space that had been planned for a new banh mi Vietnamese sandwich shop. Burger Press serves bubble tea, but that is the only Asian item on the otherwise all-American menu. Hours are 10:30 a.m. -8 p.m. daily.

### Tacos, Tacos, Tacos

Expected to open by late December is Tacos, Tacos, Tacos in the former Jimmy John's space at 241 W. Seventh St. Owner Robert Giuliani is promising a menu of authentic Mexican street food. His mother is Mexican, and he has spent a lot of time south of the border sampling the offerings of no less than 250 tacquerias. "I grew up with this food," he said.

Giuliani received his formal chef's training at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He worked in a variety of restaurants in California before opening Clyde Iron Works in Duluth with his brother. After closing his restaurant there, he operated a food truck last summer.

Tacos, Tacos, Tacos will have about a dozen seats, but the service will be primarily grab-and-go. The tacos will be made to order on a flat-top grill with a choice of meats, cilantro, onions and a selection of three or more fresh salsas, including a mild salsa verde, which is a green sauce made with tomatillos and avocado.

House specialties include the Al Pastor, which is marinated pork cooked on a vertical rotisserie; and Campechano, two meats with melted Oaxacan cheese. The menu will also include tortas, which are Mexican sandwiches, and street hot dogs with bacon, melted cheese, pickled jalapeno, ketchup and lime.

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# ON THE TOWN

## 'Christmas at its best'

### MN Chorale joins Bach Society in maestro's Christmas Oratorio

By Janet Lunder Hanafin

Johann Sebastian Bach's exuberant Christmas Oratorio will be performed on December 16 and 17 by the Minnesota Chorale and the Bach Society of Minnesota. The long-awaited collaboration between two of the Twin Cities' most venerable ensembles can be witnessed at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Saint Thomas More Catholic Church, 1079 Summit Ave., and at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at Westwood Lutheran Church in Saint Louis Park.

"Every year in December we celebrate with artistic partners from the Twin Cities one of the towering pieces of the 18th century," said Matthias Maute, who has served as conductor and artistic director of the Bach Society since 2016. "This year the Minnesota Chorale and its conductor Kathy Saltzman Romey are joining in what one might call Christmas at its best."

"I'm thrilled to be collaborating with Matthias in presenting this work," said Saltzman Romey, a Merriam Park resident who has led the chorale since 1995. "From the opening flourish of the timpani, winds and strings in 'Jauchzet frohlocket' ('cheer and rejoice') to the grandeur of the concluding chorale, it's music that I find deeply moving and profound."

The oratorio was first performed in 1734. It celebrates Christ's Nativity in six cantatas that were originally meant to be performed in church on different feast days during the Christmas season. Bach adapted the score and wrote new lyrics for this piece using music he had previously composed. Cantata I, for example, celebrates the birth of the Christ Child with music Bach had written for a prince's birthday.

This is the first joint concert by the Minnesota Chorale and the Bach Society. The two organizations had scheduled a collaborative performance for March 2020 and a dress rehearsal was held, but the concert was cancelled due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The Minnesota Chorale is the principal chorus of the Minnesota Orchestra. It was founded in 1972 and has 200-plus members, but it performs in various configurations depending on the demands

of the program. Thirty-five singers will take part in the Christmas Oratorio.

The Bach Society was founded 90 years ago as a vocal ensemble for University of Minnesota students to sing the works of Bach. Over the years, it has become more of an orchestra of period instruments that includes singers when needed.

Bruce Jacobs of Highland Park will be playing with the Bach Society in the concerts on December 16 and 17. Some years ago, he and his wife added a music studio to their home with space for his period keyboard instruments. In 2010 he acquired a chamber pipe organ that fits in the back of his Subaru. Since then he has performed regularly with several early-music groups, including the Bach Society.

Jacobs said he loves Bach's oratorio "because it so effectively conveys the excitement and drama of the Christmas story." And it is the organ, cello and harpsichord, he added, that provide "the continuo glue" for the rhythm and harmony of the piece.

Macalester-Groveland soprano Elizabeth Longhurst joined the Minnesota Chorale shortly after moving to the Twin Cities in 1986. "I've sung in choirs continuously since age 8, when I persuaded—maybe bribed—a few neighborhood pals to form a little choir," she said. "There's so much I love about singing with the Chorale. (Saltzman Romey) is really in her element with Bach. Singing this Christmas Oratorio under her leadership gives us access to her special insights into his complex and deeply spiritual music."

Krista Palmquist of Macalester-Groveland has been a member of the Minnesota Chorale's first alto section since shortly before the pandemic closed everything down. "The Christmas Oratorio is something I've never sung before, so the music is new and exciting to me," she said. "But I never turn down an opportunity to sing music by Bach. There's always something new to discover in his works, even in the pieces you've sung many times."

Summit Hill baritone David Goudzwaard-Vaught is celebrating his 20th season with the Minnesota Chorale. He particularly enjoys the versatility of



Kathy Saltzman Romey (top) conducts members of the Minnesota Chorale in rehearsal for their upcoming performance of Bach's Christmas Oratorio. The singers will be joined in the concerts on December 16 and 17 by the Bach Society of Minnesota Orchestra (above). THREE CHORALE PHOTOS BY BRAD STAUFFER

the organization. It can mean singing with a choir of well over 200 voices, with a much smaller ensemble and anything in between. "There's a sense of newness to each project, which keeps the challenge fresh," he said.

Goudzwaard-Vaught is very familiar with Bach's Christmas Oratorio. "My family had an old recording of it on vinyl when I was a kid, and I've listened to and loved it since I was 8 years old," he said. "As an adult, it's thrilling to dive deep into learning and performing it."

"This music wasn't written for entertainment," Goudzwaard-Vaught

said. "It was written to connect with the human heart. In a season that tends to overload into numbness, this particular work wants you to feel something. It's something Charlie Brown and Linus figured out, and Bach did too, albeit in a very different cultural and religious landscape."

The Christmas Oratorio performances on December 16 and 17 will include Cantatas I, II, IV and VI. Tickets are \$35, or \$5 for students. They are available at [tinyurl.com/mr3uez37](http://tinyurl.com/mr3uez37) for the concert at Saint Thomas More and at [tinyurl.com/mv57xdre](http://tinyurl.com/mv57xdre) for the concert at Westwood.

## ON THE TOWN Briefly

### Music

**Katie McMahon**, who has graced stages around the world as the original voice of *Riverdance*, returns to the O'Shaughnessy at Saint Catherine University on Friday, December 9, with "A Celtic Christmas." McMahon will be joined on stage by her band, other singers and the Rince na Chroí Irish Dancers in this family-friendly program of Yuletide carols and stories. The music begins at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$5-\$28. Visit [oshag.stkate.edu](http://oshag.stkate.edu) or call 651-690-6700.

**Canadian classical guitarist Emma Rush** will make her Minnesota debut in

a Minnesota Guitar Society concert at 7 p.m. Saturday, December 10, in Sundin Hall, 1531 Hewitt Ave. Rush will play 19th-century compositions by Julia Piston, Catharina Pratten and Susan Domett along with music by Annette Kruisbrink, Darragh O'Neill, William Beauvais and Amy Brandon. Tickets are \$10-\$25. Visit [mnguitar.org](http://mnguitar.org).

**Multi-platinum recording artist Steven C. Anderson** will return to the Cathedral of Saint Paul on Thursday, December 15, with his 9-foot, 92-key Grand Bosendorfer piano in tow. In his sixth Christmas Together concert, he will be accompanied by organist Chris Ganza, violinist Nate

Wilson, singers Jack Cassidy and Jillian Gubash & Friends and a surprise guest who will read the Christmas story to musical accompaniment. The music begins at 7:30 p.m. Admission is free, though a \$10 donation is suggested. Seats will be assigned. For reservations, visit [tinyurl.com/msxzrm46](http://tinyurl.com/msxzrm46).

**"What Sweeter Music."** The Singers will present their annual Christmas concert on December 10 and 11. Along with beloved carols and seasonal favorites, the program will feature compositions by Reena Esmail and B.E. Boykin and new works by Timothy Takach and conductor Matthew Culloton. The music begins at

7:30 p.m. Saturday at Lutheran Church of Good Shepherd, 4801 France Ave. S. in Minneapolis, and at 2 p.m. Sunday, at Nativity Catholic Church, 1938 Stanford Ave. Tickets are \$35. Visit [singersmca.org](http://singersmca.org).

**The Star of the North concert band** will present a free holiday concert from 7:30-9 p.m. Wednesday, December 14, in the cortile of Landmark Center.

**The Seward Concert Band** will present a Holiday Block Party at 7:30 p.m. Friday, December 16, in the auditorium of Sanford Middle School, 3424 42nd Ave. S. in Minneapolis. The tentative program includes



## 14 ON THE TOWN BRIEFLY

seasonal favorites by José Feliciano, John Williams, Leroy Anderson, Chris Bernotas, David Shaffer, Franz Gruber, Irving Berlin and John Philip Sousa. Admission is by donation with \$6 suggested for adults, \$5 for seniors and \$4 for students.

**The Barley Jacks** will perform their mix of bluegrass, blues, Celtic and R&B music in concert on Friday, December 16, in Weyerhaeuser Auditorium at Landmark Center. The 8 p.m. show will be preceded at 7 p.m. by a cocktail hour. Tickets are \$25 at the door, \$20 in advance at [landmarkcenter.ticketleap.com](http://landmarkcenter.ticketleap.com).

**The folk duo Storyhill** wraps up its holiday tour with a performance at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, December 17, at the Fitzgerald Theater, 10 E. Exchange St. The acoustic program will include songs off their album "Bethlehem" along with reimagined Christmas classics, seasonal favorites and other originals from their 30-plus years performing together. Maine songwriter Connor Garvey opens the show. Tickets are \$29.50-\$50. Visit [first-avenue.com](http://first-avenue.com).

**Lex-Ham Community Band** director Austin Virasy-Ertelt will present his final concert with the local ensemble on Saturday, December 17, in Buetow Auditorium at Concordia University-Saint Paul, 310 N. Hamline Ave. The free holiday program will begin at 7 p.m.

**"Into the Light"** will be presented by the eight-man choral ensemble Cantus in 10 concerts from December 9-20 across the region. The Christmas program is a contemporary take on the lessons and carols tradition elevated by the Choir of King's College at the University of Cambridge. It centers on nine themes with modern poetry and a wide-ranging repertoire. The local concerts will begin at 11 a.m. December 9 at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis; 7:30 p.m. December 10 at the Capri Theater in Minneapolis; 3 p.m. December 11 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Stillwater; 7:30 p.m. December 12 in the auditorium of Fridley High School; 11 a.m. December 15, at Meetinghouse Church in Edina; 7:30 p.m. December 16, at the Ordway Concert Hall; 3 p.m. December 18 at Hamline Church United Methodist, 1514 Englewood Ave.; and 7:30 p.m. December 20 in the Chapel of Saint Thomas Aquinas at the University of Saint Thomas. For tickets, visit [cantussings.org](http://cantussings.org).

**Jazz and finger-style guitar** will be showcased in a Minnesota Guitar Society concert on Wednesday, December 21, in Fingal's Cave at MetroNOME Brewery, 289 E. Fifth St. Briand Morrison from Grand Portage will open the show from 6-7:30 p.m. followed by Daniel Volovets of the Twin Cities from 7:30-9 p.m.

## Exhibits

**"Threads of Freedom,"** the art of veteran Jeffrey Stenbom, is on view through January 8, 2023, in the North Gallery at Landmark Center. Using primarily glass, Stenbom has created works shaped by his experiences in the Armed Services. Stenbom will discuss his art in the gallery at noon on Thursday, December 8. Admission is free and open to all.

**Christmas in Saint Paul circa 1910** is being relived in guided tours of the James J. Hill House, 240 Summit Ave. The 60-minute tours of the Gilded Age mansion step out between 10 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. daily, now through December 31. They feature holiday memories of both the Hill family and their domestic staff. The cost is \$18, free for children age 4 and under.



PHOTO BY DAN NORMAN

**"Defending Democracy,"** art about democracy, fighting oppression and promoting justice, will be exhibited by the Jewish War Veterans from noon-2 p.m. Sunday, December 11, at the JCC's Capp Center, 1375 Saint Paul Ave. Explore the artwork, listen to talks by Jewish veterans, and watch a video of veterans telling their stories. Admission is free.

**Tiny Art Expo,** a show and sale by 40-plus artists from across the region, continues through January 8 at the Argyle Zebra Gallery, 308 Prince St. The exhibit includes 490 works measuring no more than 12-by-12 inches and selling for \$100 or less. The gallery is open from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. A Books & Beer Pop-Up event will be held from 2-6 p.m. December 10. A Last-Minute Shopping event with live music and light refreshments will be held from 2-6 p.m. December 17. Call 651-224-3757 or visit [theazgallery.org](http://theazgallery.org).

## Family

**Discover what it means to be a hero** when Disney on Ice skates into Xcel Energy Center on December 8-11. Mickey and Minnie and the gang will lead this magical adventure through a medley of classic and modern tales. Show times are 7 p.m. Thursday, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Friday, 11 a.m., 3 and 7 p.m. Saturday and 1 and 5 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are available at the box office or by visiting [ticketmaster.com](http://ticketmaster.com).

**The Snowy Day,** a drama about the joys of the season through the eyes of a child, is being presented through December 23 by SteppingStone Theatre for Youth. Written by Jerome Hairston with music by Victor Zupanc, the play is based on the books by Ezra Jack Keats. The curtain rises at 7 p.m. Fridays, 3 p.m. Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays, and 7 p.m. on December 22 at Park Square Theatre, 20 W. Seventh Place. Tickets are \$16 and \$20. Visit [steppingstonetheatre.org](http://steppingstonetheatre.org).

**Come for a free photo with Santa** and stick around for games, gift making and a reading of classic Christmas stories on Sunday, December 11, at Landmark Center. The Santa's Workshop program will run from 1-3 p.m. Admission is free. Call 651-292-3225.

**The Twin City Model Railroad Museum,** 668 Transfer Road, has brought back Night Trains. From 3-7 p.m. on Saturdays (except Christmas Eve), now through February 25, the lights are turned down and the model trains and the miniature villages through which they pass will be aglow in holiday decor. Admission is \$15 for Night Trains, \$10 at other times, free for children age 4 and under. Visit [tcmm.org](http://tcmm.org) or call 651-647-9628.

## Northern flights.

Circus Juventas flips, tumbles and soars through the seasons in *Solstice*. The youth circus school's third annual holiday production is running from December 9-18 under the big top at 1270 Montreal Ave. From the candlelit opening procession to the snow-showered finale, the Nordic-inspired adventure is filled with dazzling aerial feats. It was written and directed by the mother-daughter duo of Betty Butler and Rachel Butler Norris. Show times are 7 p.m. Fridays, 1 and 7 p.m. Saturdays, and 1 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$35, or \$25 for children ages 3-12, seniors and active military personnel. For reservations, call 651-309-8106 or visit [circusjuventas.showare.com](http://circusjuventas.showare.com).

## Theater

**A Christmas Carol Krampus, or It's A Pretty OK Life,** an irreverent mash-up of such familiar holiday characters as Frosty, Hermey, the Grinch and Dickens' ghosts, will be performed from December 9-17 by Classics Lost 'n' Found Theater. The new holiday production for adults is written and directed by Lisa M. W. Phelps. Show times are 7 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays at Lake Nokomis Presbyterian Church, 1620 E. 46th St. in Minneapolis. Tickets are \$15, \$12 for students and seniors.

**A young Jewish woman** takes a job as the "second girl" in the home of a strict Christian widower. Afraid of losing the job, Rachel Leibovich changes her name to Monica Leary to keep her faith a secret in *A Servants' Christmas*. This look at life on Saint Paul's Summit Avenue at the turn of the 20th century is being staged through December 18 at History Theatre, 30 E. 10th St. Ron Peluso directs a cast that features Gary Briggie, Serena Brook, Jennifer Burleigh-Bentz, Erin Capello Kopp, Sullivan Cooper, Cathleen Fuller, Norah Long, Eric Morris and Nicola Wahl. Tickets are \$15-\$70. For reservations, visit [historytheatre.com](http://historytheatre.com) or call 651-292-4323.

**The Mysterious Affair at Styles** at Styles, a new play based on an Agatha Christie mystery, is being performed through December 18 at Theatre in the Round, 245 Cedar Ave. S. in Minneapolis. Published in 1920, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles* introduced readers to detective Hercules Poirot as he investigates the midnight poisoning of a family matriarch. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$25. Call 612-333-3010 or visit [theatreintheround.org](http://theatreintheround.org).

**Nicolas,** the story of the real Father Christmas, is being staged through December 29 at Open Window Theatre, 5300 S. Robert Trail in Inver Grove Heights. Written and directed by Open Window artistic director Jeremy Stanbary, the drama tells of the 4th-century Saint Nicholas of Myra whose faith, heroic generosity and humble service to the less fortunate inspired the

modern-day Santa Claus. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 2 p.m. Sundays with additional shows on December 13, 20, 21, 27 and 28. Tickets are \$18-\$28. Call 612-615-1515 or visit [openwindowtheatre.org](http://openwindowtheatre.org).

**A long-running holiday tradition,** Langston Hughes' *Black Nativity* is being performed through December 24 at Penumbra Theatre, 270 N. Kent St. Lou Bellamy directs. Musical direction is by Sanford Moore and the Kingdom Life Church Choir. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Fridays, 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturdays and 4 p.m. Sundays. Tickets are \$20-\$45. Call 651-224-3180 or visit [penumbra theatre.org](http://penumbra theatre.org).

**Disney's Beauty and the Beast,** a musical adaptation of the classic folk tale, is being performed through December 31 at the Ordway Music Theater. Rajané Katurah, Nathaniel Hackmann and Jamecia Bennett star. For reservations, call 651-292-3268 or visit [ordway.org](http://ordway.org).

## Books

**Northern Wisconsin author Carol Dunbar** will discuss her debut novel, *The Net Beneath Us*, with author Peter Gey in a free program at 6 p.m. Monday, December 12, at Next Chapter Booksellers, 38 S. Snelling Ave. Call 651-225-8989 or visit [nextchapterbooksellers.com](http://nextchapterbooksellers.com).

## Et cetera

**Celtic Holiday Hooley,** a two-hour Irish variety show with live music, stories and sketches, carolling, step dancing and more, will be presented from December 9-17 at Celtic Junction, 836 N. Prior Ave. Emceed by comedians Joshua Will and Natalie O'Shea, the all-ages show will feature performances by singer Norah Rendell, Todd Menton of the band Boiled in Lead, multi-instrumentalist Dennis Curley, fiddler Kelsey Gunn, guitarist Dean Magraw and choreographer Cormac O Sé and the O'Shea Irish Dancers. Show times are 7:30 p.m. Fridays, 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sunday. For ticket information, visit [celticjunction.org](http://celticjunction.org).



## The classic Christmas ballet.

Flannery Page, 14, of Macalester-Groveland (above) stars as Clara and Zhong-Jing Fang and Jose Sebastian of the American Ballet Theatre play the Sugar Plum Fairy and the Cavalier in Ballet Minnesota's production of *The Classic Nutcracker*. The ballet about a young girl who is given a marvelous nutcracker by her mysterious godfather and then dreams of the nutcracker becoming a prince and leading an army of toy soldiers in battle against the Rat King will be staged on December 16-18 in the O'Shaughnessy at Saint Catherine University. Helping to tell the tale will be 100-plus Ballet Minnesota company members, apprentices and students. The curtain rises at 7 p.m. Friday and 2 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$5-\$45. Visit [oshag.stkate.edu](http://oshag.stkate.edu) or call 651-690-6700. For live streaming and student group ticket information, email [balletmngrouptickets@gmail.com](mailto:balletmngrouptickets@gmail.com).



# SPORTS

## Boys' hockey preview

### Coaches stress strong goaltending, defense as clearest path to victory

By Bill Wagner

Boys' high school hockey coaches would all love to have a roster with several snipers who can put the puck in the net. However, they also know that natural goal-scorers don't grow on trees. Besides, the consensus among most coaches is that the first step toward winning starts in their own end with the goalie and defensemen.

In order to win games, they say, you must first keep the puck out of your own net. Once you do that, you can worry about scoring goals.

New coach Mike Randolph, who comes to Saint Thomas Academy after a sterling 32-year career at Duluth East, said goaltending and defense are a large part of the battle. "That's the way I like to build my teams," he said. "The best teams are the ones that play best in their own end."

Randolph said a strong defense is possible every night, while offense is more iffy. "Scoring comes and goes," he said, "but everybody needs (defense), especially come playoff time. Toward the end of the season,

you see a lot of 1-0 and 2-1 games."

Saint Paul Academy coach Bill McClellan agreed. "I believe goaltender is the one position where you can steal a game," he said. McClellan stresses defense to his players, noting that offense is often a natural gift more than a coached skill.

"It doesn't take a lot of skill to defend," said McClelland, though it does require discipline and effort.

Cretin-Derham Hall coach Matt Funk said an outstanding goalie can almost single-handedly help a team win, but he also stressed the importance of a good defensive corps to get the puck out of the team's own zone. Funk said defensive skills involve having "vision and anticipation."

Highland-Central coach Paul Ryan concurred that defense is the clearest path to winning. Still, he acknowledged that it can sometimes be a tough sell to players when the accolades go to goal-scorers.

"Everybody wants to be in the offensive end," Ryan said. "They all want to have their names announced (for goals)."

Here's how the area boys' hockey teams shape up as they take the ice:



Highland-Central goalie Ben Olson holds his own with the help of defenseman in the Scots' 5-2 win over Rochester Lourdes on December 3 at Highland Arena. PHOTO BY BRAD STAUFFER

#### CRETIN-DERHAM HALL

**League:** Suburban East

**Previous record:** 24-5

**Coach:** Matt Funk

**Key players:** senior center Jake Fisher, senior left wing Attila Lippai, senior right wing Devin Cardenas, junior center Chuck Owens, senior defenders Simon Houge,

Colton Jamieson and Lucas Cernohous.

**Outlook:** Funk's big task is to build some positivity among players returning from last season, when the Raiders entered state as the top seed in Class AA but lost in the first round. "We need to remember that

BOYS' HOCKEY PREVIEW ►17



## The Wright Call

By Dave Wright

## Paying tribute to a coaching legend

It was snowing hard when they gathered at Assumption Church to formally say goodbye to Dennis Denning. The snow reminded a fellow of an April afternoon that he had spent with Denning, who died on November 22 at age 76. That April meeting was at Denning's favorite place—the bandbox where Cretin-Derham Hall plays its home baseball games.

On that day, the Raiders were hosting Como Park. As he did for all 28 years he was the Cougars' head coach, the cherubic Bob Turner was busy before the game exhorting his troops to ready for battle. In his heart of hearts, Turner likely knew the opposition had better talent, but it didn't matter.

On the other side of the field, Denning stood calmly waiting for the game to start. There was no reason for a lengthy pep talk. As was the case for his entire time at CDH, Denning expected his team to be ready to go when game time came.

The young home plate umpire looked at the threatening sky. Since there was no precipitation, he sighed and signaled the start of the game. In the second inning, Como scratched out a pair of runs for a 2-0 lead. As the Raiders came to bat, the flurries started. By the second or third CDH batter, it was a full-fledged snowstorm. The umpire stopped play with the knowledge that if a game was stopped in mid-inning at that time, the score reverted to the previous finished inning when it resumed.

That thought sent Turner into a frenzy. "You can't stop the game!" he roared.

"Bob, it's snowing hard," the umpire replied. "We can't play in the snow."

Turner was undeterred. "You don't understand," he said. "We've never been ahead of them before."

At that point, Denning walked over and said, "We'll

pick it up from here tomorrow. The weather is supposed to be better."

The umpire sighed again and said, "Can't do that, Dennis. That's not the rule."

Denning just smiled and said, "We're going to do it. OK with you, Bob?" Turner nodded in agreement and everybody went home.

The weather was better the next afternoon. The Raiders went on to win. It was one of 379 triumphs credited to Denning in his 17 years as CDH baseball coach. After winning six state championships and 15 Saint Paul City Conference crowns, Denning moved on to become head coach at the University of Saint Thomas in 1995. He used the same formula at UST that worked so well for him at CDH. In his 15 years there, the Tommies won 522 games, a pair of NCAA Division III championships and a like number of second-place finishes.

"He never wanted the opposition to be comfortable," said Jim O'Neill, who succeeded Denning as baseball coach at CDH. "At the same time, he'd tell his players not to be afraid to make mistakes. Dennis liked to play aggressive."

An example of that was in section games where the decision who would be the home team depended on a coin toss. Most guys who won the flip wanted to bat last. Denning often opted to bat first and put the opposition on its heels early.

To an outsider, that might seem like an aggressive line of attack to a game. The reality was Denning's approach was exactly the opposite.

"He didn't get overly technical. He didn't like mental mistakes. He wanted his teams to know the fundamentals," O'Neill said. (No high school team has ever bunted better. A *Pioneer Press* article in the '90s on this ability was titled "Raiders of the Lost Art.")

"A lot of coaches don't seem to realize how much fun baseball can be," O'Neill continued. "They try to do too much. Dennis would do things like having 'hustle points.' You could earn them, but you could also lose them."

Such a system promoted an unspoken competition between starters and reserves, keeping everybody involved. It was one of many rituals that Denning felt led to success.

He left nothing to chance. The same umpire who had shivered through the two-day Como Park game found himself behind the plate when the Raiders were playing at Highland Park. Those games against the Scots took on extra meaning because so many of the participants knew each other. Both teams wanted to win badly and looked for any edge they could get.

Early in this game, the umpire noticed the CDH catcher would occasionally wave his hand toward his team's bench. When asked why, the youngster replied, "Dennis wants me to signal him if I think you missed a pitch."

The umpire told the catcher to knock it off. A few pitches later, his hand was waving again. The umpire called time, grabbed the baseball, walked to the mound and waved to Denning to join them.

"Dennis, I understand what you're doing but this must stop," the umpire said. "If somebody over there figures out what you're doing, there's going to be trouble."

Denning considered that for a second and quietly said to the catcher, "Just let me know how many bad calls at the end of the inning."

When you win as many games as Denning did as a coach (901 between CDH and UST), you obviously have talented players. But O'Neill zeroed in on another reason for Denning's success. "He used common-sense strategies," he said. "Don't take too long of a lead. Be smart when running the bases. He didn't like big swings at the plate. He was a 'hands' hitter." Rod Carew was a better role model than, say, Miguel Sanó.

Although he'd been out of the game for more than a decade, Denning's former rivals came from far and wide to pay tribute to him at Assumption.

Asked about what he remembered about Denning, former Hill-Murray baseball coach Terry Skrypek said, "He covered everything. His infield/outfield before games was really something to watch. They did everything right."

Skrypek's last game as head baseball coach was the 1982 state championship game against Cretin. "They bunted us to death," he recalled about the Raiders' 8-3 win. "They never beat themselves."

Gregg Wong is a retired *Pioneer Press* sportswriter who served as an official scorer for Minnesota Twins games for years. Once or twice a year, Wong would pick up Denning and take him to Target Field to watch the big boys play ball. They were at a game shortly after former Raider Joe Mauer had resumed catching for the Twins after a knee injury. An opposing runner stole second base when Mauer's throw was late. Denning noted, "Did you notice Mauer didn't get out of his crouch? To get guys at this level, you have to throw on your way up."

"I thought I knew the game well," Wong said. "Dennis would focus on things I never saw. It was fabulous. It was an education."

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



# With no fees, rec centers double the number of players signing up

By Jane McClure

It has been a busy fall and winter at many of Saint Paul's 26 recreation centers. Thanks to \$1.5 million from the federal American Rescue Plan (ARP), the sports registration fees have been waived for children ages 9-18. Some recreation centers that have not fielded a soccer or basketball team for years have had teams suited up and ready to play this year.

"We're seeing rec center teams coming out that we haven't seen before," said Saint Paul Parks and Recreation director Andy Rodriguez.

There are 1,536 youngsters registered to play basketball this winter at the city's recreation centers. That is a 108 percent increase over last year. This fall there were 418 youths ages 10-14 registered to play soccer at the recreation centers. That is a

94 percent increase over last year.

About 20 of the city's 26 recreation centers are fielding teams in soccer or basketball. Rec centers that did not typically field teams but have done so this year include Dayton's Bluff, McDonough and Hayden Heights.

"It just shows that eliminating those fee barriers plays a role in providing services," Rodriguez said.

"It's an example of how a relatively minor change can have an enormous impact on our families," Mayor Melvin Carter tweeted.

The city's fees for youth sports range from \$25-\$40 per season. While that may not sound like a lot, Rodriguez said, it can put team sports out of reach for many families.

The ARP money is being used to reduce the fees charged for baseball, softball, vol-

leyball, flag football and soccer in each of the next three years. Some of the \$1.5 million will be used to expand the hours at certain recreation centers and to expand the city's mobile recreation services such as the climbing walls and game trucks.

Finding ways to sustain the fee-free youth recreational programs after the federal dollars run out will be a challenge, Rodriguez said. That is something City Council members said they are interested in pursuing. One idea suggested by Ward 2 council member Rebecca Noecker is to charge more for the organizations that sponsor various races and fun runs in the city and devote some of that money to youth sports.

The fee waivers do not apply to youths who register for tackle football at Saint Paul's recreation centers. Parks and Recreation Department staff have discussed

ways to support tackle football. However, these teams are typically organized by outside booster clubs.

Fewer children are playing tackle football these days with increased concerns about concussions. Saint Paul had no Capital City League in 2022, and a return in 2023 is not expected. The Palace, Lower East Side, North Area and Harding Area tackle football programs were sidelined this fall. Jimmy Lee's tackle football program also took 2022 off, but the Summit-University rec center plans to field teams in 2023.

The West Side Boosters and Johnson Area were among the few youth groups in Saint Paul playing tackle football this fall. Frog-town Area Football fielded a program, and one of its teams qualified for a national tournament. That team and others played in a regional league along with teams from Minneapolis and suburban recreation centers.

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we were one of only eight teams to make it to state," Funk said. "But we also need to focus on winning it and not being satisfied to just get there." According to him, his defense is top-notch this year, but the Raiders will need to develop a regular goalie. They also will need more offensive production to support their talented first line.

### HIGHLAND-CENTRAL

**League:** Missota  
**Previous record:** 10-15-1  
**Coach:** Paul Ryan

**Key players:** senior goalie Ben Olson, senior center Thomas Bradford, senior right wing Charlie Eischens, senior defender George Bullard.

**Outlook:** Highland-Central is in a new

conference after several years of playing as an independent. Coach Ryan likes his team's defense, and thinks that there's other talent that will show up for his club, which opened the season with a 1-2 record. "We have a nice returning bunch of players," he said. "The kids are working hard. We want to build a winning attitude."

### SAINT PAUL ACADEMY

(with Minnehaha, Saint Agnes, Nova, Great River & Twin Cities Academy)  
**League:** Independent Metro Athletic  
**Previous record:** 8-17-1  
**Coach:** Bill McClellan

**Key players:** senior forward George Pel-tier, sophomore forward Ethan Peltier, junior defender Casey Lynn, senior defender Nelson Wodarz.

**Outlook:** The Spartans have most of what

a good team needs. Still, coach McClellan said his club needs to complement its really good skills up front with greater depth on defense. "We can skate and we can play physical hockey," he said, "but we have to play hard no matter what."

### SAINT THOMAS ACADEMY

**League:** Metro East  
**Previous record:** 13-13-1  
**Coach:** Mike Randolph

**Key players:** senior right wing Zach Howard, senior centers Tommy Cronin and Lucas Kickhofel, senior left wing Jordan Dachney.

**Outlook:** Coach Randolph brings a sterling resume from Duluth East to STA, intent on improving the team's subpar (by their standards) 2021-22. Randolph is impressed with what he has seen so far as the Cadets

opened with strong wins over Cretin-Derham Hall and Duluth East on November 25-26. "I like our speed," he said. "We have high expectations."

### TWO RIVERS

**League:** Metro East  
**Previous record:** 11-15-1  
**Coach:** Brandon Ferraro

**Key players:** senior forward Casey Ball, senior goalie Tyler Ouren, junior goalie Brady Altier, senior defender Matthew Rash.

**Outlook:** Coach Ferraro has nine seniors on the team, along with promising juniors. He admitted that his squad is not quite equipped to compete with two other Metro East Conference foes—Saint Thomas Academy and Hill-Murray. However, he did say that "we want to be competitive with the others."

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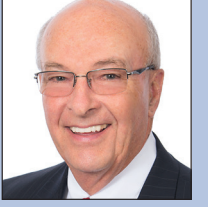
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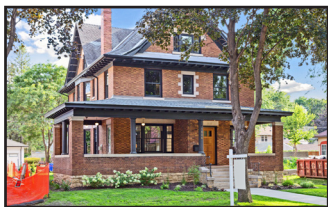


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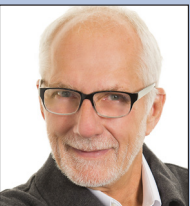
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