



Hill & Lake Press

‘Where the biggies leave off...’

Published for the East Isles, Lowry Hill, Kenwood & Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhoods

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THANKSGIVING

By Pastor Kyle Hanson

Pastor Kyle Hanson is an ordained minister at St. James Lutheran Church in Crystal and is also the Executive Director of Agate Housing and Services. He and his husband, John, and their two children live in Lowry Hill.

One Halloween, my husband, John, and I were trick-or-treating with our children and a large group of neighbors.

John was known as the enforcer, always making sure that the kids said “thank you” after receiving their treats.

At one point in the evening, he accidentally wandered off with the wrong group and was yelling at unknown children: “Remember to say thank you!” or “I didn’t hear any thank yous!”

While I am sure that the other group wondered who this random person was enforcing trick-or-treating etiquette, his efforts were intended to help our children be thankful for small gifts.

It is one of the earliest messages we learn as a child: be thankful! The Roman philosopher Cicero referred to gratitude as the “Mother of all human feelings,” and it is one of the most basic.

Gratitude is nothing if held within. In my own faith tradition, we have a formal time to express gratitude in each worship service.

This time to acknowledge what we are thankful for is an important part of our ritual because it is also a call to remember our interconnectedness.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote extensively on gratitude and said, “In normal life we hardly realize how much more we receive than we give, and life cannot be rich without such gratitude.

“It is so easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements compared with what we owe to the help of others.”

Generosity is a natural re-



(Photos: Courtney Cushing Kiernat)

sponse to gratitude. In my work as executive director of Agate Housing and Services, I marvel at the generosity of those who have so little.

When given a food kit, socks or gloves, the folks I work with often gather to share what they have been given immediately with others in the community who are also in need.

It always gives me pause to think about their immediate and instinctual actions when so many of us, who have more than we need, fail to have the same response.

The early Christian church acted similarly, and the early fol-

lowers of Jesus lived communally, thanking God and sharing all they had with each other so that no one was left without.

In the Lutheran Church there is an old hymn that we sing around this time of year, “Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices.”

The hymn calls us to prayers of thanksgiving, and in response, to act with love, actions and words. In this season, and always, may we recognize and acknowledge our gratitude for what we enjoy in life through our generosity to others whom we are called to help.

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October 6, 2024



Fans cheer on runners at the corner of Humboldt and Douglas. Vincent Quinn and his father Bryce created signs reading “Hit Here, Power Up,” with many runners punching for an energy boost! Also pictured: Freya Mollet, Nancy Rand and Garrett Stephenson. (Photo: Natalie Quinn)



Hill & Lake Press

Founded in 1976, Hill & Lake Press reports community news and events, educating and informing our neighborhood community members about issues of the day. Views expressed are not necessarily those of Hill & Lake Press.

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Our goal is to offer readers diverse perspectives on newsworthy events or issues of broad public concern to the Hill & Lake community. Our copy limit is 300 words (750 words for a commentary) and we reserve the right to edit for clarity and length.



Red Bus Zone on Hennepin Avenue: A Commuter's Frustration with Traffic and Transit Policy

I recently took a photo while stuck in the traffic pinch point before the new red bus zone on Hennepin Avenue. I sat there for 15 minutes, completely gridlocked, with no movement in sight. The most frustrating part? No buses even passed through during that time.

I understand the intentions behind this policy — to promote bus rapid transit and reduce car dependence — but for residents like me, it's become a nightmare. Living in Minneapolis but working in the western suburbs and Northeast Minneapolis, using transit isn't practical; my job requires transporting equipment that can't fit on a bus or a bike.

If you're not commuting during rush hour, it might seem like an improvement, but dealing with it daily shows another side. It's disheartening that city officials and Metro Transit implemented this change without fully considering how it would impact the day-to-day lives of working residents in a largely car-dependent metro. Minneapolis already faces enough challenges; this was an avoidable issue that's only adding to the frustration of people trying to make a living.

*Lara Miklasevics
Lowry Hill*

Mystery Solved!

I have long wondered and worried about what happened to 23rd Street.

Josie Owens' terrific article on 23rd Street was delightful and solved my mystery.

The entire Hill & Lake Press is chock full of great stories.

I appreciate being alerted to neighborhood activities and getting early information on proposed projects. Thank you.

*Sara Donaldson
Lowry Hill*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Golden Age

Regarding last month's article about the City Council not supporting I-94 expansion, I'm older and can't envision a world where highway lane reductions will be a sensible and viable plan.

I've lived in the golden age when a car is easily owned by most people, and getting in a car and driving wherever I wish, is a glorious freedom I take for granted.

I am assuming that someday our descendants will look back and marvel that once upon a time, we could simply get in our car, drive whenever and wherever, with roads and fuel readily available to accommodate us.

*Maria Meade
Cedar-Isles-Dean*

2737 E. Lake of the Isles Parkway

Really appreciate the article and the email address to which to send emails of concern. My husband and I both did so. Thanks to the Hill & Lake Press for attending to these important issues and making it so easy to weigh in.

*Leah Harp
East Isles*

CIDNA Fall Festival Gratitude

Thank you to the CIDNA Fall Festival Planning team of Kristin Dolphin, Patty Schmitz and Amanda Vallone, and all the volunteers who worked to make the event a success.

During 25+ years of living in the Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood, I've attended and helped with many of the festivals, and to some extent each has been a measure of the time in which it was held.

Before Covid, each year's plan followed in an orderly fashion from past festivals, gradually adding more covered seating and children's activities, and tables for representatives from neighborhood and city projects, and the presence of more readily available, and eager to attend, elected officials and candidates. The festivals were well attended and successful.

This year's festival on Oct. 5 was also well attended and successful, but in a special way. I felt part of a joyful, healing gathering in counterpoint to this period of disruption and division in our lives and city. There were just enough fun activities, prizes, treats and hot dogs for attendees to enjoy, but the scenery and staging were minimal.

For the main event, the casual open field of our little park embraced old and new friends, neighbors, kids, families, public servants and guests. In full display was the greatest gift we give each other: the pleasure of each other's company.

The heart of CIDNA beats on; thank you for an uplifting 2024 festival.

*Rosanne Halloran
Cedar-Isles-Dean*

An Open Letter to Council Member Cashman

I'm writing on behalf of a group of your constituents who have met several times in the last year to dis-

cuss how we might get the city to pass an ordinance banning gas-powered leaf blowers.

We've gathered evidence of the damage their incredibly toxic exhaust causes to the environment, to the hearing of those who operate them, to the peace of the neighbors who endure them, and to the critters whose habitats are destroyed by them.

And new to the list, their role in spreading the dreaded jumping worms by making their tiny cocoons airborne. What's in your backyard will soon be in my back yard.

We have met with city staff and are aware of some of the roadblocks to such a ban.

We are aware of the very generous financial incentives already being offered by the city and the state to commercial landscapers to make the switch from gas to battery-powered equipment.

(In an ideal world, blasting yard debris into the air would also be prohibited, but we're realists.)

And we know that at least 100 American cities have successfully banned them.

The city is dealing with many complicated and contentious issues right now, from public safety to housing scarcity.

But a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers should stir up little controversy and would appeal to many of your constituents who are dissatisfied with what they see as political posturing and little attention to city services.

And it would be a great step forward for the climate, the planet and all of its inhabitants.

As a dedicated environmentalist and chair of the Climate and Infrastructure Committee, you are in a great position to move this forward.

We hope you will take it on, champion it, and make it happen.

*Susan Lenfestey
Lowry Hill*

➔ **FOR MORE INFO**

<https://reasonstobecheerful.world/make-america-rake-again-leaf-blower-bans/>

NEW CRIME PREVENTION SPECIALIST JOINS MPD FIFTH PRECINCT

By Marty Carlson



The Fifth Precinct's new crime prevention specialist, Faith Randal. (Photo: Minneapolis Police Department)

Marty Carlson is a regular columnist and lives in Kenwood.

The Minneapolis Police Department has hired a new crime prevention specialist (CPS) for the Fifth Precinct, a move that should be gratifying to local community leaders. Faith Randal stepped into the position mid-summer following the retirement of long-time CPS Jennifer Waisanen, who departed at the end of May after many years of service.

OK, great, but what exactly is a “crime prevention specialist?”

Bureaucratic-sounding job title aside, it’s an important role because, among other things, the CPS acts as a first point of contact for local residents who need accurate and timely crime information, or who need help navigating the law enforcement process.

In the immediate aftermath of the 2020 riots and the subsequent spike in crime, area neighborhood and block leaders quickly discovered that Waisanen was one of their first and best sources for accurate information about specific crimes and crime trends.

Neighborhood associations, block leaders and others could then relay this information to the broader community with confidence, whether it be information about specific crimes or emerging crime trends, or to help quell unfounded rumors.

Following Waisanen’s retirement, the Fifth Precinct’s indefatigable Inspector Christie Nelson temporarily took over many of those communication duties, but given her already full plate, it was surely a relief when Randal was hired into the role.

For her part, Randal has an established background in communications and public service. A graduate of South High and life-long animal lover, she interned with Minneapolis Animal Care and Control during high school and went to work there as an officer shortly after graduating from college, remaining in that role for 10 years before leaving to assume the new CPS position.

Randal attended the University of Minnesota Morris, where she obtained a degree in communications, media and rhetoric. One of the more unusual benefits of attending Morris

was that Randal was able to bring along her beloved horse, who — she jokes — obtained a degree in nutrition while she was pursuing her own studies.

Randal says she was attracted to animal care at first because of her love of animals, but over time discovered that helping people

“One MPD service that readers may not know about: Time permitting, Randal and other MPD staff are available for in-person security consultations for both homes and businesses, free of charge. The MPD also offers personal safety classes.”

and engaging with the community was one of the most rewarding aspects of her job. Along with individual community members, she worked with schools, businesses, social services and the MPD, which reached out to recruit her shortly after Waisanen’s retirement.

Randal reports that these first few months on the job have had the typical “drinking out of a firehose” feel, but she is steadily learning her new duties, getting better acquainted with the Fifth Precinct and its residents, and beginning to network with nearby community groups.

That networking is a key part of the job, and Randal says she is working steadily to meet with local groups, to introduce herself, establish solid contacts and educate on the resources the MPD has to share.

As to first impressions, Randal’s communications background is immediately apparent. She presents as confident, calm and well

spoken, and is clearly enthusiastic about her new job. About topics she knows, she is able to speak in depth and factually, while also having the good sense and self-assurance to say that there are other aspects she’s still learning.

Randal says there’s no such thing as a typical day. While she does have defined job duties, each day is different.

Case in point: while we were meeting, Inspector Nelson was unavailable because she and her officers were responding to an active shooting, in which a domestic dispute apparently escalated to shots being fired from a Lyn-Lake apartment balcony, then morphed into a multi-jurisdictional manhunt before ending tragically with a suspect being arrested in Willmar after having allegedly murdered an innocent bystander during an attempted carjacking. That’s not a typical day by anyone’s measure.

When not responding to the unexpected, Randal has more regular job duties as a non-sworn MPD employee. In addition to her communications and networking role, Randal is responsible for following up on non-emergency 311 reports, responding to individual citizen concerns, looking for emerging trends and helping assess problem property reports.

One MPD service that readers may not know about: time permitting, Randal and other MPD staff are available for in-person security consultations for both homes and businesses, free of charge. The MPD also offers personal safety classes.

Randal says she is looking forward to doing more networking over the coming winter and hopes to be regarded as a “go-to” person for matters involving public safety in the Fifth Precinct.

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EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO MY OPINION: A HILL & LAKE PRESS ENDORSEMENT VOTE NO ON JUMPING WORMS

By Susan Lenfestey



(Image: Oregon State University)

Susan Lenfestey is a Hill & Lake Press founder and board member. She lives in Lowry Hill.

My presidential endorsement was written and ready to go, but Jeff Bezos called and said we can't run it.

So what to write about while barreling towards the most consequential election of our lifetimes?

I nominate invasive jumping worms, destroying the constitution of the soil with no regard for the consequences.

I was pulling anemic petunias out of the ground in late September and was surprised to see more worms than usual. And I was surprised at how the petunia roots had the consistency of brittle hair, and even more surprised when clumps of a nearby lime sedum fell out in my hand, totally rootless in the granular soil.

And then I realized that I was likely dealing with highly invasive jumping worms, aka Alabama jumpers, Jersey wrigglers, wood eels or crazy snake worms.

First step, the Google. Jumping worms are a death sentence to gardens and forests because they eat the decaying leaves on top of the soil.

Plants can't grow or spread without the layer of leaf litter. Instead of enriching soil with their castings as earthworms do, they leave it devoid of nutrients.

There are a few deniers posting on social media that these worms are actually saving the soil, but they appear to be bots.

Next, I learned how to identify a jumping worm from an earthworm.

The jumper is slightly darker in color, and it has more setae, or hairs, per segment. But most tell-

ing is the placement and shape of the clitellum.

The what? The clitellum, which is a band that encircles the body of the worm and carries out its reproductive function.

On an earthworm it is slightly raised and only goes halfway around the body, like a saddle. On a jumper, it is flat and does a full 360 around the body.

I've baited a few fishhooks and I've never seen hairs on a

"The destroyers of the soil reproduce asexually, meaning no mating necessary, they just produce hundreds of tiny cocoons which overwinter and hatch in the spring."

worm. Counting them was out of the question.

That meant a closer look at the clitellum to determine if it indeed went the full 360. I nabbed two worms and put one in glass jar and one in a plastic sandwich bag so I could get a closer look.

To ease my qualms about causing such suffering I named the darker more active one JD and the puffier sluggish one DJ.

I learned on the Google that there is almost no way to eradicate them, other than to drench the soil with a solution of powdered mustard in water which drives them to the surface, allowing you to remove them by hand

and put them in a bag in the sun for three days with predictable consequences.

The mustard water is harmless to critters and plants.

The destroyers of the soil reproduce asexually, meaning no mating necessary, they just produce hundreds of tiny cocoons which overwinter and hatch in the spring.

These poppyseed-sized cocoons get tracked around in the soil of potted plants, on garden tools, and are blown into nearby yards by leaf blowers. Ahem.

I spent the next week conducting an exorcism. I drenched the area with the mustard water and a few grumpy jumpers emerged from the area near those sickly petunias.

The Google says that they don't really jump, but the Google has never tried to pick one up.

I dropped them into a bucket of water. I dug out the contaminated soil, I did another drench, I sanitized my tools and my boots. I did my best to stop the destruction of democracy. I mean, the soil.

The worms in the bucket swam circular laps for days. Like alien pods in a sci-fi film, they would not die. They wound up getting the sauna in the sunshine treatment, as recommended by the Google.

As for JD and DJ, they never revealed their true identity, but they were the losers in the end. They joined their fellow jumpers carefully contained in a landfill bag.

I hope we survived the threat, but I'm afraid they're still out there. The worms I mean.



Hill & Lake Press

The Hill & Lake Press is a non-profit newspaper funded and supported by its advertisers and neighborhood associations:

- East Bde Maka Ska Neighborhood Association (EBMSNA)



- East Isles Neighborhood Association (EINA)



- Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA)



- Kenwood Neighborhood Organization (KNO)



- Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA)



- West Maka Ska Neighborhood Council (WMSNC)



PROFIT MOTIVES DRIVE RECUPERATIVE CARE CENTERS DESPITE OVERWHELMING NEGATIVE FEEDBACK FROM NEIGHBORING BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS, THE CITY COUNCIL GRANTED A PERMIT FOR A 24/7 RECUPERATIVE CARE CENTER AT 1801 NICOLLET.

By Terry White



Recuperative Care Center to be located at 1801 Nicollet Avenue – at the corner of 18th Street and Nicollet Avenue. (Image: Courtesy of Google Maps)

Terry White writes for the Minneapolis Times and publishes the Better Minneapolis newsletter. He lives in the Field neighborhood in South Minneapolis.

At their Oct. 17 meeting, the City Council unanimously approved a permit for the 24/7 recuperative care center serving the homeless at 1801 Nicollet, and the matter is now under mayoral review.

By the time this article is published, it will likely have been approved. There was no discussion at the meeting, and the concerns of neighboring businesses, the Stevens Square Neighborhood Association, a childcare center and residents went unheard.

A review of the documentation from the approval process reveals many contradictions. At times, the facility is described as housing for the homeless to align with the 2040 plan, while at other times, its medical purpose is emphasized.

City planning staff noted that neighborhood feedback alone could not be used as grounds for denying the permit. Yet the intern who wrote the request to the city claimed that no community feedback was received.

These discrepancies can be found in the city’s Legislative Information Management System under 2024-00979.

Even if public opposition alone cannot prevent the project, the substance of the comments submitted should have been given serious consideration by the City Council and planning committee. It appears they were not. Had they been, serious questions would likely have been asked of Accord Health Services:

If none of the first seven reasons gave the planning commission and City Council pause, the eighth should have.

Ongoing fraud investigations in the state include cases involving translators and transportation for medical services, autism evaluation centers, personal care

assistants for the elderly, daycare centers and the Feeding Our Future case — the largest pandemic fraud case in the country, involving \$250 million. Consider this finding, reported in the Minnesota Reformer in August 2023:

“About half of the people charged by the U.S. Department of Justice with stealing hundreds of millions from a federal program to feed children during the pandemic have been paid tens of millions more in state money for

services such as providing childcare and assisting seniors and people with disabilities.”

Recovering ill-gotten gains after fraud has been committed is extremely difficult. As the Feeding Our Future investigation revealed, not only was the money spent on lavish trips, cars and homes, but it was also invested overseas, making it inaccessible to U.S. authorities. Some of the defendants who pled guilty may leave jail as wealthy individuals.

It’s baffling to outsiders that the planning commission and City Council failed to recognize the obvious red flags surrounding these centers.

The state has functioned for years without them, so why the sudden urgency? It seems illogical to allow these facilities to proceed before the state establishes basic standards and procedures.

As a medical facility, they should undergo review by a medical board. As a for-profit company billing \$9,000 per month per patient to Medicaid, strict auditing and financial controls are essential.

These are fundamental business practices. Requesting these safeguards is not a matter of NIMBY-ism, racism or being anti-homeless — it’s about expecting responsible governance from elected officials.

It’s the kind of accountability Minneapolis residents can insist on when they next vote for City Council and mayor.

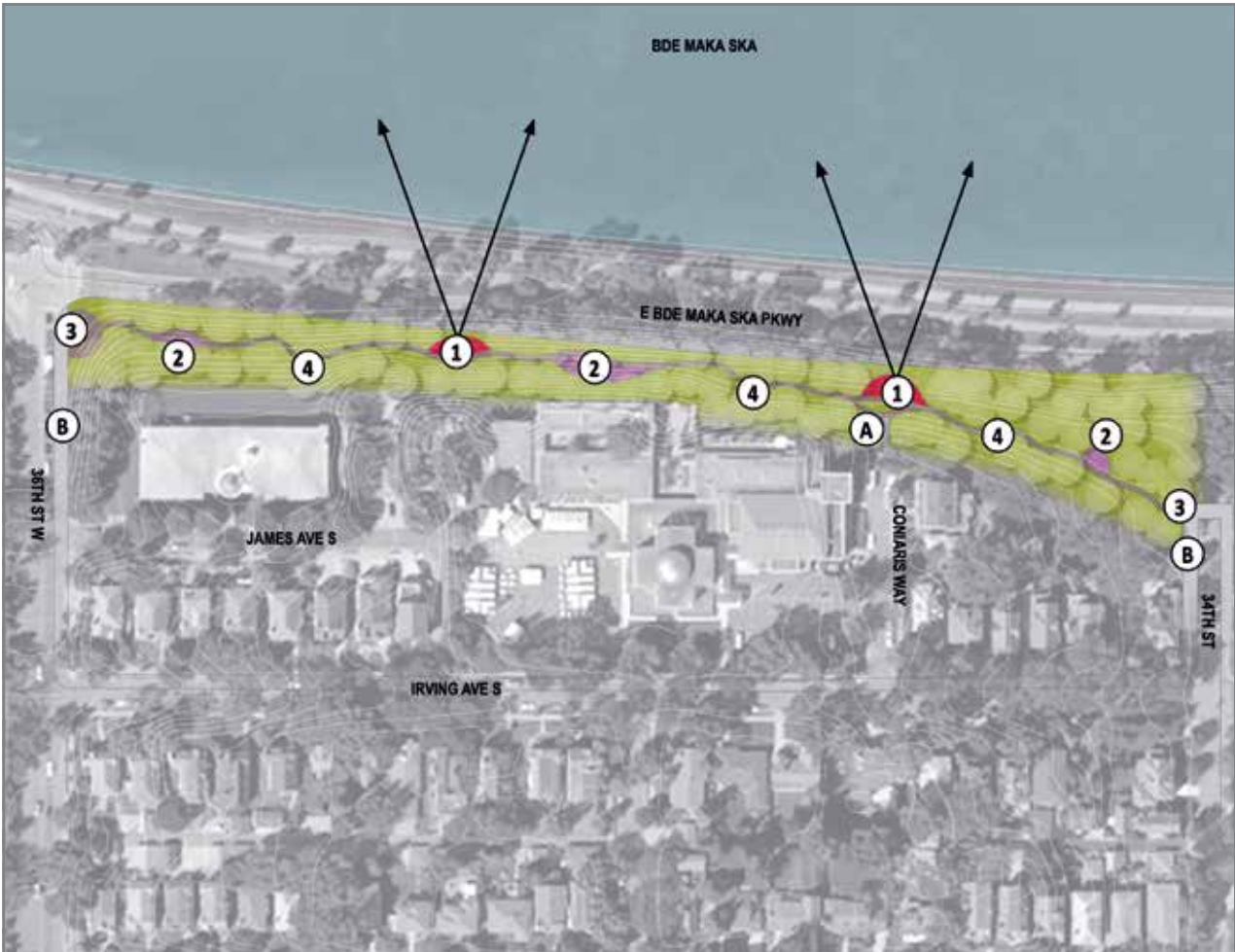
“As a medical facility, they should undergo review by a medical board. As a for-profit company billing \$9,000 per month per patient to Medicaid, strict auditing and financial controls are essential. These are fundamental business practices. Requesting these safeguards is not a matter of NIMBY-ism, racism or being anti-homeless — it’s about expecting responsible governance from elected officials.”

→ SOME SERIOUS QUESTIONS:

1. Why are there no written operating procedures?
2. Why are there no medical staff involved?
3. How can public health be ensured when there is only one security guard for 64 patients?
4. Patients will be provided with a 7’ x 7’ windowless room and one bathroom per eight people. Is that design conducive to recovery?
5. Can a new for-profit company that has changed ownership multiple times and has no employees with significant experience in running a medical facility be trusted?
6. Is it appropriate to place temporary housing for homeless individuals recovering from illness in a neighborhood already struggling with crime and drug use?
7. There are already several homeless shelters and the Groveland Emergency Food Shelf in the area. Is it appropriate to add another shelter?
8. The state legislature authorized these recuperative care facilities in its 2023 session. Has the Minnesota Department of Human Services demonstrated that it has the resources and regulations in place to prevent fraud and abuse?

LOON LAKE TROLLEY PATH PARK

By Josie Owens



LOON LAKE TROLLEY PATH – PROPOSED PLAN

(Image: Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board)

Josie Owens is a regular columnist and lives in Lowry Hill.

Hidden along the east side of Bde Maka Ska is a park that is well appreciated by those who know of it.

Walking the hillside above East Bde Maka Ska Parkway between West 36th and 34th Streets, the visitor is surrounded by the quiet, natural beauty of the woods and transported from urban life that is only a short distance away.

This park shares much of its history in its name — Loon Lake Trolley Path Park.

Loon Lake

Before it was named Bde Maka Ska and before it was named Lake Calhoun, it was called Mde Mdo’za, Sioux for Lake of the Loons, or Loon Lake.

The name Mendoza was the official name until 1850 when the name changed to Calhoun. In 1890, there was an attempt to change it back to Mendoza but without success.

“The Park Board may work as hard as it can to change the name of the lake, but people won’t have it. They still call it Calhoun and they will

keep on. You might as well try to change the name of Minnehaha.”

That change would have to wait until 2020 when the name changed to Bde Maka Ska, Dakota for White Earth Lake.

Trolley Path

On June 19, 1954, Minneapolis’ last streetcar ran. The city replaced the streetcars with the cheaper bus system.

The stretch of trolley line from 36th to 34th Streets West was no longer needed and was eventually acquired by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Today the 50-foot-wide parcel is part of the Chain of Lakes Regional Park.

Bde Maka Ska-Harriet Master Plan

In 2020, the Park Board approved the Southwest Park Plan and said, “This project does not include recreation centers or areas classified as regional parkland.

“The one exception is the Loon Lake Trolley Path. The plan for that park space will be amended into the Bde Maka Ska-Harriet Master Plan.”

Emma Pachuta oversees master planning in the Chain of Lakes from Lake Brownie to Lake Harriet.

Although there is no funding currently, she is working with the community to clarify a plan for the Look Lake Trolley Path park.

Pachuta says that the path reminds her of small trails at Cedar Lake: “They are regularly traveled paths. The Park Board wants to recognize and protect them so that they can stay indefinitely.” Not all are kept. “We try to be very intentional with what remains and what is returned to nature.”

When a building on one end of the park burned down in late 2022, the Park Board acquired the land, increasing its potential.

“Before it was named Bde Maka Ska and before it was named Lake Calhoun, it was called Mde Mdo’za, Sioux for Lake of the Loons, or Loon Lake.”

Some Chain of Lakes funding may be available in 2026-2027 to start the LLTP Park development.

East Bde Maka Ska Neighborhood Association

In the meantime, the East Bde Maka Ska Neighborhood Association oversees this passive park. They have cleared debris and put down mulch.

At their last meeting on Sept. 23, Elizabeth Shaffer attended to discuss the Trolley park. The members shared their vision to protect the natural feel where children build forts and the occasional coyote wanders through.

They did request that the Park Board tend to some basic needs like mowing. Shaffer promised to work on their needs while they wait for money to do the bigger project.

The association felt that they could create their vision with less money compared to other parks.

Shaffer agreed that “money is tight, but maybe you can come up with a better plan.” In the meantime, the association and the Park Board will work together as stewards of this land.

Shaffer said, “That is a great idea. What is the point of having park land if we aren’t using it?”

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ONGOING ROAD CONSTRUCTION IN UPTOWN



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THE FUTURE IS ELECTRIC

Opinion by Carol Becker

Carol Becker served on the Board of Estimate and Taxation at the City of Minneapolis from 2006-21. She lives in Longfellow.

In 2018, the City of Minneapolis adopted its long-range plan, the Minneapolis 2040 Plan.

The city dramatically reduced regulations on development, including eliminating protections for single family housing and allowing much taller and larger apartments throughout the city, in the hopes that developers would flock to build more housing.

In total, the city hoped these changes would increase population by at least 75% over the next 20 years.

If this kind of growth were to happen, it would substantially increase population density.

This picture shows what streets with high frequency transit bus routes and neighborhoods near downtown would become over the next 20 years.

This would include commercial corridors like Lake Street, Central Avenue, Nicollet Avenue and Franklin Avenue as well neighborhoods like Seward, Near North and St. Anthony East.

This kind of density, rivaling New York City, would also require different ways to get around.

Travel by automobile at densities like those in this picture would be impractical. There just would not be enough space for street parking and parking ramps. Instead, the city planned for a massive shift away from auto travel to walking, biking and transit.

Based on this plan, in 2020, the city adopted its Transportation Action Plan to implement these changes. The core of this plan was a 60% reduction in auto travel by 2030, with a presumption that 25% of trips would be taken by walking, bicycling would triple and transit ridership would double by 2030.

The city is now rebuilding its roads as if this is going to come true. How is it going?

Population Growth

According to the U.S. Census, the population of Minneapolis declined, from 430,710 in 2020 to 425,115 in 2023, about 1.2%. This is most likely because of the declining birth rate. It takes 2.1 babies per woman to have a stable population, and the U.S. is at 1.61. Homes are filled, just with fewer people.

Auto Travel

Vehicle miles traveled in Minneapolis declined 3% from 2016 to 2020.

From 2019 to 2023, miles traveled declined another 11%. This decline happened mostly 2019 to 2020 then rebounded from 2020 to 2021 and has remained stable since.

This change is most likely due to a tripling of people working from home and a tripling of the number of minutes people spent at home alone as opposed to going out with others.

Transit 15

The Transit 15 district is typically applied along high frequency transit routes, adjacent to METRO stations, in neighborhoods near downtown, and in downtown.

Built Form Guidance: New and remodeled buildings in the Transit 15 district should reflect a variety of building types on both moderate and large sized lots. Building heights should be 4 to 15 stories. Building heights should be at least 4 stories in order to best take advantage of the access to transit, jobs, and goods and services provided by the Transit 15 district. Requests to exceed 15 stories will be evaluated on the basis of whether or not a taller building is a reasonable means for further achieving Comprehensive Plan goals.



minneapolis | 2040

This image from page 70 of the Minneapolis 2040 Plan illustrates what streets with high-frequency transit bus routes and neighborhoods near downtown could transform into over the next 20 years. (Image: City of Minneapolis)

Transit

Transit ridership peaked in 2015, after the opening of both the Blue and Green light rail lines.

Uber debuted in Minnesota in 2015, and transit ridership declined 9% from 2015 to 2019 as a result. Transit ridership has fallen about another 40% from 2019 to mid-year 2024.

As a result, in Metro Transit's new 2027 transit plan, 8% of service will be an Uber-like service with vans instead of buses or trains.

Walking & Bicycling

Walking has declined precipitously. In the Twin Cities, walking declined 47% from 2019 to 2022.

Nationally, biking increased 37% from 2019 to 2021, then flatlined in 2022.

The Twin Cities ranked 30th in per capita biking in 2019 and 33rd in 2022, actually increasing less than other metro areas, despite making heavy investments in bike amenities.

Impacts of Changes

Since the city started making roadway changes in 2018, deaths increased 79%.

There isn't a measure of carbon emissions, but it is obvious to the naked eye that carbon emissions are up all over the city.

Roadway changes like on East Lake, Hennepin Avenue, Lake Street and many other places mean cars are now in congestion, idling where they were not just a couple years ago.

To put it mildly, it has been a climate disaster.

Minneapolis has doubled down on the desire to have cars idling unnecessarily recently by passing a resolution to remove I-94.

The Future Is Electric

There is a better future. It is electric vehicles. The UK Government, Department for Energy Security data shows that electric vehicles on average produce 47 grams of carbon dioxide-equivalents per passenger kilometer. Heavy diesel buses produce 97 grams on average and gas automobiles produce 171.

If Minneapolis were serious about climate change, it would admit its "everyone should walk, bike and take transit" approach is failing and instead go all-in on electric vehicles.

"The core of this plan was a 60% reduction in auto travel by 2030, with a presumption that 25% of trips would be taken by walking, bicycling would triple and transit ridership would double by 2030. The city is now rebuilding its roads as if this is going to come true."

— Evelyn Turner

This means ending its war on cars and reversing changes where it has increased carbon emissions and energy costs like Hennepin Avenue, Lake Street and others.

This means preserving and expanding parking because that preserves space for charging stations.

That means expanding, not eliminating, I-94 to reduce congestion and the energy cost of getting around the region, especially given that population growth is grinding to a halt.

I appreciate that this is a very different understanding of the solution to our climate challenge. But what we are doing now is failing badly. Instead of doubling down, we need to admit there is a better solution, one that everyone in the Twin Cities can adopt. And that is electric vehicles.

Will regional transportation planners change? Probably not. There is a huge activist industrial complex built around promoting biking and transit and none for promoting electric vehicles. Perhaps it is time for a new revolution. The future is electric.

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THE HISTORY OF TRANSIT IN UPTOWN: Part Three – The Story of Uptown/East Isles Transit

By Aaron Isaacs



A photo series from the past couple of years showcases the dramatic transformation of the landscape along the Kenilworth Trail. Tens of thousands of trees were cleared to pave the way for the Southwest Light Rail project. (Photos: Peggy Weller)



METRO

Green Line

EXTENSION

This is the third in a three-part series. It discusses how the Southwest light rail will impact the Uptown neighborhoods. Aaron Isaacs is the historian for the Minnesota Streetcar Museum and is also a retired Metro Transit planner and manager.

The Green Line Extension is scheduled to open in 2027. I won't dwell on the controversies, construction difficulties and cost increases that have plagued it. Instead, this article will discuss how the finished line will change the transit system and the Uptown/East Isles neighborhood.

The line's first impact, already very apparent, is the extensive development near the stations. Large apartment buildings have sprung up near most of them, with more to come. As of December 31, 2022, 8,120 new apartments had been permitted, with another 7,000 planned. According to the Metropolitan Council, development along the Green Line Extension through 2022 was valued at \$2.8 billion, with an additional \$780 million planned. (Some have argued that they're counting things that would have been built anyway, making this an overstatement.) Of the permitted development, 57% is residential, 33% commercial, 7% public/institutional and 2% industrial.

The Hill & Lake neighborhood will have walkup LRT access at the West Lake Station and 21st Street Station. West Lake, surrounded as it is by apartments and retail, will be by far the busier, perhaps the busiest on the entire line. Compared to today's Route 17 bus, travel time to downtown (5th and Nicollet) will be cut in half, from 29 minutes to 14 minutes.

LRT will restore transit service to Kenwood, which currently is down to a single daily rush hour round trip. Besides downtown, Kenwood and West Lake will also have

convenient access to the University of Minnesota, the airport and all the sports venues (Twins, Timberwolves, Lynx, Vikings, Gophers, Minnesota United and St. Paul Saints).

From the Kenwood and West Lake Stations, the Green Line will provide faster and twice as frequent service to Hopkins as compared to buses, and much faster, all-day service to the Opus II employment area in southeast Minnetonka. It will bring first time transit access to portions of St. Louis Park and to Eden Prairie, home to one of the largest concentrations of suburban employment.

Bus Connections from Minneapolis
Although it will be fed by all the bus routes that serve downtown, the Green Line Extension will also have feeders directly from south Minneapolis that pass through Uptown. Already in place is Route 21, which runs the length of Lake Street. By 2027 it will be replaced by the B Line bus rapid transit (BRT). Also in place is Route 17, which travels from downtown via Nicollet, 24th Street, Hennepin and Lake Street. Currently in place is the combined Route 23 (38th Street) and Route 612 (Excelsior Boulevard), joined end-to-end to avoid this year's Uptown street reconstruction. That combination will be made permanent as Route 38, feeding the LRT at the West Lake Street Station from 38th Street.

Under consideration is a proposal to extend Route 2 (Franklin Avenue) to the 21st Street Station from its current terminus at Franklin and Hennepin. It would travel via Franklin, Penn Avenue and 21st Street, providing a short cut to the LRT from Franklin and reviving bus service through Kenwood. Metro Transit's highest priority is staffing the LRT and new BRTs, so Route 2 would be a later addition, if it happens at all.

Parkland or Development

When Hennepin County bought the railroad right of way through Kenwood, it included former rail yards north and south of 21st Street, as well as the vacated engine terminal site below the Kenwood water tower. Even with the LRT, bike trail and freight rail, there's plenty of land left over. How will it be used? Although perceived as park land, it isn't, at least not yet. It's not at all clear that the Park Board will want to take it over. If that doesn't happen, might it be zoned for residential development? I ask that because very few people live within walking distance of the Penn Avenue station and there are no plans to feed it with buses. If the land remains vacant, one must ask why the station was built at all.

Editor's Note: Neil Trembly's deep dive into this issue on the next page concludes with statement from Marion Greene that the legal agreements "give a significant amount of reassurance that any remnant parcels will stay in public hands."



REMNANT LAND IN THE KENILWORTH CORRIDOR TO REMAIN PUBLIC?

By Neil Trembley



Map with remnant land outlined. (Image: Neil Trembley)

Neil Trembley is a member of the Cedar Lake Park Association and the author of “Cedar Lake Park Association: A History.” A self-proclaimed historian, he received a grant from the State of Minnesota’s Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund to publish the book. He resides in Bryn Mawr.

“At some point we will have to decide what to do with the excess land in the Kenilworth Corridor.”

When a Hennepin County staffer uttered those words at a meeting back in 1996, my ears instantly perked up. “What?” I asked. “What did you say?”

He explained that after completion of the Southwest Light Rail Transit project, there would be surplus land in the corridor not needed for the Southwest Light Rail right-of-way.

He indicated that Hennepin County would have to determine what to do with this property. It was the first time I heard of the “remnant land” issue.

This story really begins 40 years ago.

In 1984 Hennepin County, through its Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA), purchased a large parcel of land in the Kenilworth Corridor from the Chicago & North Western Railway. (The railroad had previously gobbled up the historic Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway (M&StL), which had dominated the Kenilworth Corridor for almost a century.)

HCRRA locked down the land for use as a possible route for a future Southwest light rail. Although light rail was only a distant vision in 1984, HCRRA was thinking ahead.

Separately, Minneapolis in the 1990s embarked upon an ambi-

tious plan to construct a non-motorized trail system.

The city viewed the Kenilworth Corridor as an ideal trail link between the Cedar Lake Regional Trail (1995) and the projected Midtown Greenway (2000). But there was a catch. HCRRA had purchased the corridor for light rail use and had concerns about putting a trail through its future LRT right-of-way.

After much discussion, the sides agreed there’d be room for both trail and rail and HCRRA green-lighted the project.

So in 1996 the city convened a meeting of Kenilworth Trail Citizens’ Advisory Committee. I attended the meeting as a representative of the Cedar Lake Park Association.

Previously CLPA had been a driving force in the purchase of a 48-acre abandoned rail yard north of Cedar Lake, its incorporation into Cedar Lake Park, and in the subsequent construction of the Cedar Lake Regional Trail.

CLPA hoped that there might be land in the Kenilworth Corridor that could also be incorporated into Cedar Lake Park.

Describing the Remnant Land

The property (see map above) can be broken into two distinct wedges of land.

The 38-acre northern section lies just below the Kenwood Bluffs, from I-394 to 21st Street. This site had once been the hub of M&StL’s rail empire with over 20 major shops blanketing the area. When HCRRA purchased the land, it reduced the M&StL’s vacant buildings to rubble.

A scrub forest soon grew up among the debris. In its present state, it is doubtful that this area would be suitable for development.

The 10-acre southern portion runs from 21st Street to Cedar Lake Parkway. Much of this land was once underwater, a part of the old Cedar Lake East Bay.

About 150 years ago, the M&StL began to fill in the bay and then laid tracks over it. After HCRRA bought the property from M&StL’s successor, all but one of the tracks were removed. The unburdened land grew into lovely little prairie — at least until recently, when the area became a construction zone.

After construction, much of this area undoubtedly could be suitable for development. Or it could be made into a park.

The Coming of Light Rail

Over 30 years after HCRRA initially bought the Kenilworth Corridor, its vision became a reality. In 2016 the Metropolitan Council chose the corridor as the preferred route for Southwest light rail. To facilitate construction, HCRRA transferred ownership of the entire Kenilworth Corridor to the Metropolitan Council.

Not long after, the Met Council and the City of Minneapolis completed a Memorandum of Understanding. Included in the MOU was language regarding the remnant land: “The Council intends that any property located in the Kenilworth Corridor that it may acquire from HCRRA that it will not actively use for either the Project or freight rail shall be conveyed to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for use as parkland upon terms and conditions that are agreeable to both the Council and the Park Board.”

There was, however, a potential roadblock. Prior to transferring the corridor to the Met

sition site.” But it said nothing about the section south of 21st St. Was this an oversight? Or something else?

The Cedar Lake Park Association is troubled that the plan did not include the southern section of remnant land.

It started delving into relevant documents and asking questions about the remnant land’s ownership and possible disposition, especially of any land “suitable for development.”

CLPA contacted the various organizations for clarification. Although it took several months, CLPA’s tenacity paid off. Recently it received an email from Hennepin County Commissioner Marion Greene. After having her legal staff review all the pertinent agreements, she wrote, “Overall, I think these agreements give a significant amount of reassurance that any remnant parcels will stay in public hands.” It is heartening that Hennepin County/HCRRA now appears to embrace the view that even land in the corridor suitable for development should remain in public hands.

THE END GAME

It is now almost 2025, two years before the anticipated completion of the SOUTHWEST LIGHT RAIL project. Time is running short and there appear to be several issues that still need to be ironed out:

- Will the Met Council dispose of the remnant land, or will it be HCRRA?
- Will all the remnant land be offered to the MPRB?
- Will MPRB accept the land and at what price? (Indications are that MPRB is amenable.)
- Finally, have the various parties begun to develop a mechanism for the land transfer? Are HCRRA, Met Council, City of Minneapolis and MPRB communicating with each other?

The clock is ticking.

“Much of this land was once underwater, a part of the old Cedar Lake East Bay.”

Council, HCRRA passed resolution 14-HCRRA-0049R1. It stated, “... HCRRA understands that the MPRB has not officially requested such land, and in any event it is understood that such excess or remnant land does not include HCRRA-owned properties that are suitable for development, so HCRRA is making no commitments regarding “excess” or “remnant” land at this time ...” HCRRA’s resolution seemed at odds with the Met Council’s MOU with the city.

The issue resurfaced in 2023, when MPRB’s Cedar Lake-Lake of the Isles plan touched on the remnant land issue. The Park Board identified the section north of 21st Street as a “further acqui-

UPTOWN WINTER WONDERLAND HOLIDAY MARKET: SUPPORT OUR UPTOWN BUSINESSES

By Craig Wilson, Editor



Step inside a life-sized snow globe for a fun, immersive photo opportunity! Part of The Arts Experience, this interactive art installation, brought to you by the Uptown Association, is perfect for families looking to capture a unique holiday memory. (Photos: Thang Holt and Judy Longbottom)

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

For the third year in a row, Uptown’s Winter Wonderland Holiday Market is set to light up the neighborhood, offering locals a chance to support small businesses while getting into the holiday spirit. Organized by local residents and business owners, this grassroots event aims to revitalize the area by driving foot traffic to local shops and creating a festive, community-driven experience.

The market, hosted by Seven Points, has grown significantly, now featuring over 30 vendors — nearly double the number from last year. Local artisans and small business owners will offer a variety of holiday goods, making it an excellent opportunity for visitors to shop small and find unique gifts.

Judy Longbottom, owner of The UPS Store, has been a part of Uptown’s business scene for 20 years and shares why she’s involved in the event. “We believe in this neighborhood and want to do all we can to help it

“ ‘We believe in this neighborhood and want to do all we can to help it get back to the vibrant, lively area we know it can be,’ Longbottom explains, emphasizing her commitment to Uptown’s recovery after challenging years.”

get back to the vibrant, lively area we know it can be,” Longbottom explains, emphasizing

her commitment to Uptown’s recovery after challenging years.

Beyond the shopping, the Winter Wonderland will also include live local music, crafts and activities for families, a roller skating party (with ticketed admission) and a food drive benefiting Joyce Uptown Food Shelf. Volunteers will be distributing dining guides and coupons to encourage visitors to explore local eateries, ensuring the festivities extend beyond the market.

Adding to the festive atmosphere, holiday lights and window displays will be installed for the event and will remain up throughout the entire holiday season, keeping the spirit of Uptown alive long after the market ends.

With its blend of holiday cheer, community spirit and support for local businesses, the Uptown Winter Wonderland Holiday Market is set to be a bright spot in the season for both the neighborhood and its visitors.



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An evening view of the Uptown Transit Station and the Midtown Greenway. (Photo: Ryan Jandl)



A serene moment captured as a deer gracefully pauses in the heart of the forest, blending seamlessly with the tranquil surroundings. (Photo: Ryan Jandl)



A jaguar spotted in the jungle. (Photo: Ryan Jandl)

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Meet Your Neighbor

Interview by Susan Trondson

Dr. Verna Price and The Power of the People Leadership Institute



Dr. Verna Price
(Photo courtesy of www.drvernaprice.com)

Susan Trondson is a POPLI Board Member and Career Coach. She lives in Lowry Hill.

In a community in which discussions often focus on teenage carjackings, vacant storefronts and disruptive construction, we have a chance to highlight organizations and individuals bringing hope and positive change to our city.

Several years ago, I discovered one such organization, The Power of the People Leadership Institute. POPLI has been transforming the lives of youth in the Twin Cities since 2007 by offering mentoring programs that emphasize career development, personal power and leadership training to middle school and high school students and community youth groups.

Founded by Dr. Verna Price and her husband, Brother Shane Price, POPLI is a powerful force for good in our community and beyond. I have had the pleasure of working alongside their team and mentoring many girls over the years. The future looks bright when you're engaging with this community.

I recently reconnected with Dr. Verna after a Minnesota Lynx Changemakers Event. Girls Taking Action, one of POPLI's programs, was selected by The Timberwolves and Lynx as a Key Impact Partner in 2024.

Here are some insights from our conversation about the meaningful impact she and her team are making in Minneapolis and around the world.

You're certainly one of the most passionate people I have ever met. Remind me how POPLI got started?

In 2005 I received a phone call from North High School looking for help, as they were experiencing a rise in violence among girls.

Working closely with the faculty, families and community leaders we introduced a program intended to reengage girls in academics and positive leadership, provide girls with a meaningful connection to positive women leaders, prepare girls to graduate on time from high school and pursue higher education, and engage girls in their community through service-learning.

At roughly the same time, my husband received a similar call from Faribault Correctional Facility, and he began the Replanting Program to support incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Following these successful pilots, we continued to expand to schools that approached us and to include young men in our Boys of Hope program.

What is POPLI's mission?

Engaging, empowering, mentoring and training youth and adults to positively transform their lives.

Our approach challenges, inspires and informs individuals, helping them overcome obstacles and achieve success in all areas of life through personal power, personal development and leadership training.

To deliver on this mission, we have three focus programs. First, Girls Taking Action (GTA), which provides weekly mentoring and empowerment groups in schools and community chapters, immersing girls in topics such as personal power, health and wellness, racial justice and equality, college preparation, STEM career development and service learning.

Next comes Boys of Hope (BOH), which engages boys in the same weekly mentoring programs noted above to stay in school, achieve academically, make good decisions, and stay out of trouble in school and community.

Lastly, the Replanting Program. Did you know that it costs \$63,000 a year to house an inmate in Minnesota? We need to stop this cycle. Our replanting program serves incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals by helping them overcome obstacles and achieve success in all areas of life.

What I really love the most is that your program leaders consistently show up — every week. They are real heroes in my book!

Yes, they are. It's critical that our girls and boys can count on us. We invest in both our mentors and our participants. We collectively practice the beliefs found in our curriculum for personal power, which is based on my book, *The Power of People*. The intention of the book is to help people of all ages to discover their personal power and ability to positively influence their life and world.

As an example, we help individuals to understand the four kinds of powerful people: Adders, Subtractors, Dividers and Multipliers. Then explore how Adders and Multipliers can put you on the road to success while learning to deal with Subtractors and Dividers who are negatively influencing your life.

What has the impact been?

Since inception, POPLI has impacted over 12,000 lives. One hundred percent of POPLI youth graduate high school on time, and 80% enroll in college.

Mentoring students through high school graduation not only builds a foundation for a successful adult, but it also benefits the entire community.

In Minnesota, 72% of African American students graduate from high school. The 28% who drop out of school cost the community \$292,000 each in supplemental programs, lost taxes and more.

And it has been so exciting to watch the engagement of your alumni back into the community.

Yes, we are very proud that alumni from our program now sit on our POPLI board, work on our team, mentor our youth and hold

positions with many local organizations including Blue Cross Blue Shield, Target, Medtronic, the Minnesota Timberwolves and beyond.

What are you most proud of?

When we receive impactful testimonials like these from our participants:

"What I liked most is about the careers and opportunity to meet new positive and powerful role models and friends who share the same ambitions as me." — GTA participant

"I learned how to be a strong representative leader to others who may need leaders or guidance." — BOH participant

You're one of the most determined and action-oriented people I know. What's next?

We have big plans as we look to the future!

First, we intend to purchase a building in North Minneapolis for our main office and core programming to position POPLI for legacy and sustainability.

We aspire to provide a paid internship to every high school senior in our youth program.

We plan to expand our employment programming for members of our second-chance community who face the reality that finding a livable wage job seems impossible.

Finally, we intend to increase our health and wellness services to provide at least one mental health provider to every mentoring group at least four times per year.

How can people get involved to help?

We welcome your support however you are able. Can you share a leadership story? Suggest a building for us? Offer an internship? Become a career coach? Sponsor a youth activity? Donate money? Consider POPLI for Give to the Max Day on Nov. 21.



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Club Day Monday with **Lori Dokken**
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Monday, November 4
5:00 pm: Open for drinks & tapas 5:30 pm: Concert

Join us for a special Election Day Eve Cabaret featuring ten of the Twin Cities’ greatest women vocalists, including Mary Jane Alm, Ashley Commodore, Ginger Commodore, Connie Evingson, Katie Gearty, Jennifer Grimm, Rachel Holder, Patty Peterson, Judi Vinar, Lori Dokken.

PAY IT FORWARD This is a Pay It Forward performance. \$5 from the sale of each ticket will be donated to Project DIVA International. Project DIVA guides Black girls to self-discover, think, find alignment with their truth, and be financially successful. The next President of the US might be one of the girls benefiting from the work of this great organization.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Voices from the field

A post-election evening together

6:00 pm: Club opens for drinks
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The Woman’s Club and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota present a post-election recap. The moderator will be Lori Sturdevant, author and editorial writer and columnist for the *Minnesota Star Tribune*. Panelists include Peter Callaghan, staff writer at *Minnpost*; Laura Helmer, President, League of Women Voters of Minnesota; Heather Heyer, Director of the Office on the Economic Status of Women; Neda Kellogg, Executive Director of Project DIVA International; Laura McCallum, Politics and Government Editor at the *Minnesota Star Tribune*; Gloria Perez, President & CEO of the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota; and Steve Simon, Minnesota Secretary of State.

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Marathon Water Stop Report in CIDNA

Photos and article by Patty Schmitz

Runners come through CIDNA for just a brief time, but the water stop provides them music, hydration and lots of cheers. The volunteers are energized by the smiles and the thank yous from the runners.

After last year’s Marathon cancellation, the 2024 water stop came back strong, serving 3,300 runners. The event is a passion project of two Cedar-

Isles-Dean residents and wouldn’t be possible without the amazing volunteers who come out to help – from cup filling to clean up.

This year, we had a VP candidate “sighting” and some hilarious signs from those cheering runners on. Looking forward to 2025 when we hope to serve even more runners!



Lowry Hill Update

Please make an effort to shop local this holiday season. Uptown businesses continue to be affected by construction along our major streets on top of pandemic hardships. Support your local shops and economy!

The Uptown Holiday Market returns Saturday, Nov. 23, 11 AM – 5 PM at Seven Points. Browse local goods and treats, enjoy live music, a roller skating party, arts activities, games and more! The event is seeking local artists and makers: vendor registration can be reached from our website.

Did you know storm drain street trash pollutes our lakes and rivers? Save our waters—less trash, less leaves, no slime means beautiful lakes. Adopting a drain is free, easy to do, and takes only minutes to maintain: mn.adopt-a-drain.org



Election Day 2024

Nov. 5 Tuesday, polling places open 7 AM – 8 PM
Find your polling place, learn how to register, and how to take work PTO to vote without using personal leave or vacation time: vote.minneapolismn.gov

Lowry Hill Board Meetings

Nov. 12 • Dec. 3 Tuesdays, 7 – 9 PM
Kenwood Community Center: 2101 W Franklin Ave
All residents are welcome! If you have questions or would like to be on the agenda, please email us: lhna@lowryhillneighborhood.org

Neighborhood Walks

Nov. 16 • Dec. 21 Saturdays, 10 – 11:30 AM
Start + end at Sebastian Joe's: 1007 W Franklin Ave
Join us for friendly walks around Lowry Hill! This is a great way to stay active and get outside, meet your neighbors, pick up litter, and build community.

Year-End Giving

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ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ

By Philip Lowry

Philip Lowry is a retired physician and lives in Lowry Hill.

We have all temptations of different sorts. Mine range from munching on cereal just before bedtime (I recommend Wheat Chex), to binging on the Alone series, to staring at water and wondering how I can get into it. I have felt this urge as long as I remember. There are plenty of people who like to swim, but not too many who actually want to jump in off a frosty dock. Ivy, our golden retriever, understands this completely.

For many years I have swum on various adult (Masters) teams both here and in California. I am by no means a fast swimmer — I call myself the slow but steady type. Although my swimming speed has never dampened my enthusiasm, I did wonder whether I could ever emerge from this plateau. I started lessons with Tim Walton, swim instructor par excellence, who used the word “chaotic” when he first described my swimming style. As it turns out, my legs and arms were working pretty hard, but they were doing their own thing. With the help of a speaker inside my swim cap so I could get real time instruction from Tim, as well as several poolside videos he took, I began to appreciate what I was doing wrong.

I learned that when the right leg kicks, the left arm extends under the water. And vice versa. You need to incorporate a little pause to get the timing right. As I worked on this, my thoughts traveled to a short conversation I had with Thomasina Petrus after one of her performances. “Ev-



View of Alcatraz Island (Photo: Philip Lowry)

everything I do and see is in rhythm,” she said. “I even notice the rhythm of the windshield washers.” According to Tim, one of the best ways to reinforce swimming technique is to learn how to ballroom dance. He should know — he’s a pro at doing both.

I decided I needed to put my newfound “beat” to the test. I signed up for the Alcatraz Invitational, a 1.27-mile swim I have done in the past, using my old-fangled “chaotic” technique. The event is a fundraiser for the much beloved South End Rowing Club, held every September, when the water in the Bay is warmest (low 60s). As you might expect at any large gathering in San Francisco, high spirits and general zaniness abounded. A bagpiper led the early morning march from Aquatic Park to Pier 41, where everything you’re not swimming with (i.e. towels, sweatshirts, flip flops) had to be handed off before you loaded the boat. That makes for a crowd that likes to stay together, especially the morning of Sept. 7, which was chilly and grey.

The air temperature alone made me really glad I was wearing a “shortie” wet suit, although almost half of the crowd went without. The boat left

the pier and stopped just offshore of Alcatraz. An announcement was then made that we would be jumping from two platforms on either side of the boat. Every five seconds, three people per platform were told to jump into the water, with the amazing efficiency of loading a chairlift. It’s about a 10-foot jump, and we were told we should swim away from the boat ASAP. By this point, I had a distinct pit in my stomach.

When I landed, saltwater shot up my nose — yuck — but thankfully my goggles and cap stayed on. The instant cold activated my ankle timer, and also made me want to move. But the waves caught me by surprise — this really was “big water,” more so than what I remembered. The motion of the waves initially had me rolling clumsily in a way I couldn’t control.

Between waves, I followed the yellow caps of the other swimmers, and after some minutes and a few mouthfuls of water, I focused on what Tim had taught me. I eventually found my rhythm, and even did a turnaround to enjoy the splendid view of the Golden Gate as the

sun broke through the fog. The time passed, thankfully with no sightings of a dorsal fin, and the landmarks gradually looked closer. At some point, I was thrilled to hear the clapping and cheering of the spectators at the finish line. I thought I was close, but sound travels a long way over water. Eventually I blissfully felt solid ground under my feet and made my way up to the finish line. Immense relief flooded me.

Here’s the amazing thing about the Alcatraz swim: the age range was 11 (no wet suit!) to 81, and out of 505 swimmers, a full 48 of them were aged 66 or older. Yes, these are Californians mostly, who can revel and swim in the sun all year, but this age distribution still amazed me. A few of the oldest swimmers needed an arm to steady themselves as they got out of the water, but their huge smiles said it all. I spoke with a few of them, who said they did the swim faithfully every year. The plan was to keep going as long as their bodies allowed.

I realized that they were absolutely right. Why not keeping joining the party as long as you can? I was tickled that my time had improved quite a lot, and I was thankful to Tim for that. I was happy to know I could still “escape from Alcatraz” should the need ever arise. But what I really valued were the confirmations — to keep learning, to keep getting in the water, and to keep remembering those folks — even past 80, who aren’t afraid to give it a try. I am hoping this will be my annual pilgrimage. Please come and join me next time.

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Dear Neighbor

A monthly column by Dorothy Richmond



Dorothy Richmond is founder of the Dear Neighbor column and a longtime resident of Cedar-Isles-Dean.

Dear Neighbor,

It’s November, the kickoff to the holiday season. First up: Thanksgiving. And while the bulk of print ads and television commercials may have you thinking yours is the only unharmonious family on earth, I’m here to tell you that you’re not alone.

Thanksgiving assemblies come in two varieties: family gatherings and those with good friends. If it’s the latter, you’re good to go, surrounded by people who know, love and accept the real you. There’s plenty to eat and even more to talk about, all of it jolly. Thanksgiving with family can be that way, but it can also be dicey. I speak from experience.

Herewith, some do’s and don’ts for an untraumatic family Thanksgiving.

Do attend only if you’ve recovered from last year.

Do offer to bring something you can manage. One year I offered to bring all the beverages — wine, pop, fizzy water, beer (I’m not a good cook, as my bio-family will happily tell you).

I’d have brought a case of Mad Dog 20/20 if I thought it could produce joy, harmony, good will. I was instructed instead to bring three homemade pies. “Um, I know a fabulous bakery, and I could. . .” “Make them,” was the response.

Sequel to the above: Don’t burden guests with the impossible. The possible can be so wonderful. I bought pies. They were delicious and enjoyed posthaste.

Don’t pick a fight. This is always good advice, but especially important on Thanksgiving when the ridiculously inconsequential can be the apple of discord.

Years ago, standing there, minding my own damn business like a good Minnesotan and drinking a Pepsi, I was approached by a

notoriously pugilistic family member brandishing a can of Coke.

He demanded, “Why do you drink that crap?” I said, “Because I like it.” He trumpeted, “Only idiots and losers drink Pepsi.” I told him he should work in an ad agency and pitch that slogan.

Don’t bring up past and petty recriminations. One of my family members lugs around a Hefty bag overflowing with grievances — the anti-Santa — and regards grudges as coupons that have unlimited use with no expiration date.

But what can you buy with those things? Certainly not a fun Thanksgiving.

Do swear. Perhaps my favorite, and truly most loving and real, Thanksgiving memory was the year my mother, the ultimate Catholic who never swore — not even “hell,” except to remind us often that was where all non-Catholics were headed — went to check on the turkey and CRASH!, followed by the F-bomb heard ‘round the world.

I ran to the kitchen where she stood ashen, the oven door lying on the floor, and I hugged her, loving her intensely for revealing her humanness. There were many others, to be sure, but this was one moment when I loved my mother completely, and it was reciprocated.

Don’t sneeze at the table. Now, this may seem obvious to you, but not to one family guest who showed up sounding like he belonged in a tuberculosis sanitarium. Hacking and wheezing, it all came to fruition as dinner began. I’ll spare you the exudate’s graphic details by saying simply that it was Mt. Etna, part deux.

Sequel to the above: Do stay home if you’re sick.

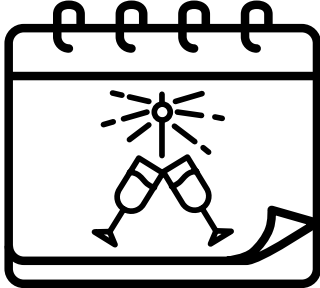
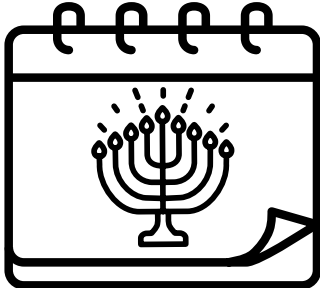
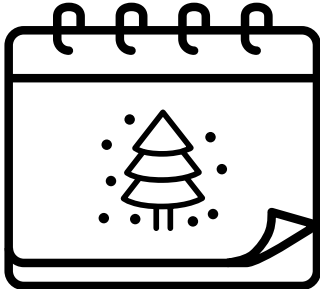
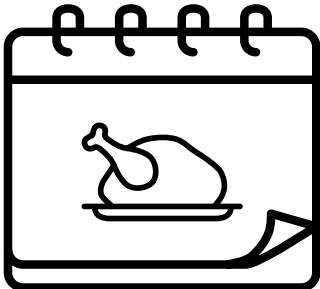
Do show up on time. One member of my extended family, renowned for lavishly disregarding others’ timelines, arrived several hours late. Repeated calls to her apartment (this was before cell phones) went unanswered. No one was even remotely worried (we’d seen this movie a thousand times). We were singing the praises of the pies with odes to whipped cream when she entered, gazed at us all in disbelief, and huffed aggrievedly, “You started without me?” That led to the famous “scream-off” when a thousand javelins of truths were hurled through the air and as many hurled back. Ah, family.

I admit it. I used to wig out at such functions, but several Thanksgivings ago, at approximately the 40-minute mark of a family member’s raving about his new socks — their beauty, their versatility, their functionality — something snapped in me,

and it was good. It was an expansion of the old “If you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.” I realized that if you can’t join ‘em, just sit back and enjoy the show.

Pass me some of that fancy Thanksgiving popcorn. And a Pepsi.

— Dorothy



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