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# monitor

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# CVS opens doors at University and Snelling



The new CVS Pharmacy at 499 Snelling Ave. North in St. Paul joins over 5,400 others as a part of the largest pharmacy chain operating in the United States. (Photo by Terry Faust)

By JAN WILLMS

The new CVS Pharmacy at 499 Snelling Ave. North in St. Paul joins over 5,400 others as a part of the largest pharmacy chain operating in the United States.

The business that opened October 30 at one of the busiest intersections in the Twin Cities is drawing mixed reactions from University Avenue residents, promoters and activists.

"The store reminds me of every Broadway musical you have seen, with the back stage door with the red light above it," said Steve Kufus, an attorney in the Spruce Center located across the street from CVS on University Avenue.

The corner site CVS occupies previously has housed banks, a pizza shop and a furniture store, and Kufus said he has been looking at the intersection of Snelling and University all of his adult life.

"If, as they say, it is the busiest intersection in Minnesota and the main artery between the downtowns, and if it is going to be taking on Light Rail in the future, there either is a higher and better use for that intersection or at a minimum, the facility should have been so situated as to first highlight and at least acknowledge the importance of University Avenue," Kufus said. "In its completed state it's a slap in the face of the community."

Kufus said he based his concerns on the appearance of the building, which faces Snelling Av-

enue. "University is a more important thoroughfare than Snelling, and this is like turning your backside to University," he said.

Kufus, a past board chair of the Midway Chamber of Commerce, said he sees no rhyme or reason for CVS to have been built at its present location.

"What a great spot that would have been for a YMCA," Kufus said. "Besides, there's a Walgreen's right on the corner."

He said he questioned whether any other opportunities were explored for the best use of the space. "You might have to be a place like CVS to afford that property," he added.

"I have nothing against chains," Kufus said, "but I personally shop at small, locally-owned shops. That's my preference."

"The little people are not listened to," Kufus continued. "We have no say, no clout. The people in the neighborhood who are upset have to make their voices known by their shopping habits. I am not going to set foot in there."

Kufus said he hoped he is not around when the only choices are a CVS or Walgreen's. "They'll be able to put any price they want on things," he said.

Several attempts were made to contact CVS at the local and district level, but no comments on the placement or location of the store were given.

Brian McMahon, executive

director of University UNITED, is also unhappy with CVS's appearance on University Avenue.

"We've dealt with almost all the national chains over the past five years, including Home Depot, Menards, Lowes, Best Buy, Target, Wal-Mart and Aldi's, and the most unresponsive and difficult one, by far, was CVS," McMahon said.

"They were unwilling to put an entrance on University Avenue, and essentially turned their back on the busiest intersection in Minnesota. The result is a store that has no 'eyes on the street,' which lessens security both inside and outside," McMahon said.

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## Visit the tropics for Winter Carnival



The Orchid Society of Minnesota and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory are joining together to create the one tropical event of the Winter Carnival celebration, the Winter Carnival Orchid Show Jan. 28 and 29.

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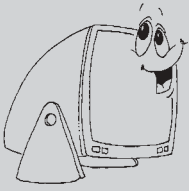
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## Midway Como in a Minute

### City Council OK signs for area nonprofits

It's not a sign from above, but from the St. Paul City Council that will allow places of worship, community centers and other nonprofit civic and educational institutions to post signs. The St. Paul City Council voted unanimously December 7 to let the institutions post small directional signs to be posted on arterial and collector streets.

Institutions that are located in residential neighborhoods have sought the signs, saying that visitors sometimes have trouble finding them. The City Council vote is welcome news for area churches that have asked if they, too, can have directional signs.

The churches' request and others have waited as the Planning Commission and City Council debate a variety of new regulations for billboards, business signs, rooftop signs, temporary banners, abandoned business signs, skyway signs, light pole flags and sign lighting. The City Council has been adopting new regulations piece-by-piece over the past several weeks. However, the council has laid over other parts of the sign regulations until late January, pending further City Attorney's Office research into some issues.

At one point the Planning Commission and City Council were against allowing the institutional directional signs, due to concerns about sign clutter. The regulations adopted December 7 allow for one to two signs per institution, within 2,500 feet of the facility. Signs on residential property cannot exceed five square feet per sign. Signs on non-residential property cannot exceed 15 square feet per sign. Signs cannot exceed 7-1/2 feet in height. Property owners must give permission before signs are posted. The city will keep sign locations on file.

What began in fall 2005 as a measure to recover some of city li-

censing staff's costs in responding to community complaints about billboards and signs mushroomed into detailed recommendations to deal with a variety of signs, banners and billboards. Disagreement over the proposed regulations have caused dissent from sign companies, businesses and business organizations against district councils, the anti-billboard group Scenic St. Paul and citizens fed up with big, blighted or brightly colored signs in their communities.

### Works by artists display at Rondo Library

Works by three St. Paul area artists will be displayed at the Rondo Community Outreach Library when it opens in spring 2006. Seitu Jones, Harriet Bart and Susan Warner were selected as the artists for the new library in 2005. The St. Paul City Council voted unanimously November 23 on agreements with all three of the artists.

The agreements take effect once the city accepts title to the artwork. The agreements allow the artwork to be displayed in a public location and give the city control over the work. The agreements also indemnify the artists after the work is installed and hold the artists harmless from damages as a result of legal actions that would arise out of the artwork display.

In turn, the artists have to guarantee the city that their works will be free of any material defects for a period of four years after the work goes on display. Such agreements are routine prior to the installation of public art.

Having public art as part of the library project is a priority for the community groups that helped plan the Rondo library. The library, which is under construction at University Avenue and Dale Street, will replace the current Lexington Outreach Library near University and Lexington Parkway.

Ground for the project was broken in October 2004. It is a

first of its kind library in St. Paul. The library will be on the ground floor of the building with a second-story parking deck and apartments above. The project has a total cost of \$23.5 million.

A total of \$45,000 has been set aside for public art for the new library. Warner will create a hand-made tile installation for the fire-place facade of the new library's reading area. Jones will create a mixed-media sculpture for the library's children's area. Bart is designing a glass panel door and complementary wall at the main entrance.

### District councils get extension on plans

St. Paul district councils that were hurrying to complete district plans are getting more time to finish their work. The St. Paul Planning Commission is recommending that work on the plans continue through 2006. The deadline had been the end of 2005.

That's good news for the Como, St. Anthony Park and Frog-town district councils. Both groups are wrapping up work on their district plans. Plans from Hamline-Midway, North End-South Como,

Merriam Park and Lexington-Hamline are already completed. Snelling-Hamline Community Council recently sent its plan to City Hall. No date has been set for Planning Commission action on Snelling-Hamline's plan.

The Planning Commission and City Council had originally given the city's district councils until the end of 2005 to complete their district plans. But with recent funding cutbacks and a dearth of outside grant resources, some of the councils have struggled to hold community review processes and draft new plans. One neighborhood just started its planning process in the fall.

Another complication is the city staff and Planning Commission review process. Summit Hill's plan was at City Hall for more than a year before it got through Planning Commission review in December.

The plan work extension would be granted with the understanding that district councils should work as quickly as possible to get plans completed. The councils use the plans to set priorities for future land use, program and public facilities decisions. The plans become part of the city's comprehensive plan after they are adopted by the City Council.

## Bethel Lutheran observes church's 75th anniversary

Bethel Lutheran Church, a Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod congregation of 175 families and 332 members located in St. Paul's Como Park neighborhood, will observe its 75th anniversary in 2006 through a year-long series of special speakers and events.

The celebration begins Sunday, Jan. 29 as the congregation observes "World Mission Sunday" with Dr. Hilbert Reimer and his wife, Joan. The Reimers spent more than 40 years serving as

missionaries in Seoul, South Korea, before retiring to Minnesota in 2004.

Dr. Reimer will lead Bethel Lutheran's worship service at 9:30 a.m., and Joan Reimer will lead an adult forum at 10:45 a.m. discussing the culture and religions of Korea.

Individuals interested in more information about Bethel Lutheran Church, its programs and ministries can visit [www.bethelstpaul.com](http://www.bethelstpaul.com) or call 651-488-6681.

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Supporters hope plan would transform green space...

# Plans unveiled for Dickerman Park

By JANE MCCLURE

Dickerman Park's rebirth centers on an ambitious redevelopment plan featuring gardens, walking paths, plazas, play space for kids and a unique photo display. Park supporters hope the plans, unveiled at a December 8 community meeting, could transform the modest quarter-mile-long green space into a one-of-a-kind attraction.

Three years of planning were celebrated December 8, as more than 60 area residents and business people viewed the park plans. Landscape architects Coen and Partners and photographer Wing Yung Huie worked with a community task force to develop a plan for Dickerman Park. Shane Coen of Coen and Partners said the park could become a national model.

That's a lofty goal for a park many people weren't aware of until recently. St. Paul Parks and Recreation Director Bob Bierscheid and Ward 4 Council Member Benanav can joke about it now, but both have to admit that they were each stumped by the question "Where is Dickerman Park?" Bierscheid admits he scrutinized

maps and directories, but couldn't find the park. Even knowing it is on University Avenue didn't help at first.

"I drove up and down this road I don't know how many times," Bierscheid said.

That's because the park appears to be the front lawn of the buildings in the three-block area. If not for small park signs, nothing would tell passersby that it is a park.

A revitalized Dickerman Park would be hard to miss. It would have gardens around its stately oak trees, which Coen said should be preserved. More trees would be planted along a path that would extend the full length of the park. Portraits of area residents and business owners taken by Huie would be interspersed among the trees, along with benches. More trees would be planted in front of the American Security/Marsden Building Maintenance building. Small plazas, outdoor seating, a coffee café and a gallery would also be part of the park, along with a new children's play area in front of the Midway YMCA.

Huie has started photographing area residents and

business people, to be featured in the park. The installation would be permanent, unlike temporary photo display projects he has done in recent years in Frogtown and along Lake Street in south Minneapolis.

Huie said he hopes the park project and the photos serve "as a mirror that shows us who we are and a window onto our collective future." He and Coen and Partners are still working details, including how the photos should be displayed, what size the photos should be and how they should be lit. It's likely the park will include different ways of displaying the photos.

Although getting the park project completed is expected to take a few years of fund-raising and continued hard work, the idea of improving the 2.6-acre park is generating excitement. Supporters say they are confident they can raise \$4 million of the \$5 million needed for the project. The rest of the funds will be sought from city, state or federal sources.

The project was one of 116 proposals in St. Paul's 2006-2007 Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB), with a

request for \$1.4 million. But it didn't win approval from the CIB Committee and isn't included in future city budgets. Still, University UNITED Director Brian McMahon believes that if there is strong enough community support for Dickerman Park, the funding will follow.

Benanav praised the many people and organizations that want to transform the long, narrow, nondescript park. "We're going to see a green space along University Avenue. We're going to fulfill the vision the Dickerman family had in 1909."

The park land was given to the city by the Dickerman family, which operated a real estate investment company in the Midway. The Dickermans deeded the land to the city in 1909, with the hope that the small park would become part of a larger green boulevard along University.

But that didn't happen. Dickerman Park is on the north side of University Avenue, between Fairview Avenue and Aldine Street. Part of the park land in front of the Griggs-Midway Building was paid over years ago for parking space. Playgrounds for the Midway YMCA and a

charter school building, as well as more parking, also encroached on the park land.

Efforts to save Dickerman Park began in 2002 when area residents contacted Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County for help to improve the park. University UNITED, district councils in Hamline-Midway and Merriam Park, Public Art St. Paul and other groups joined in.

So did neighboring businesses, including Marsden Building Maintenance. Mary Marsden, owner of Marsden, was one of the first people to volunteer for the community planning task force. Her company's building faces the park.

"I immediately said I want to be a part of it," she said. Marsden calls the park plans "spectacular" and urged everyone to keep working to get the project completed.

Dickerman family members still in St. Paul, who had forgotten that the park even existed, also became involved after reading newspaper accounts about the park project. "The family is thrilled about the park plan," said Kent Dickerman.

## CVS Pharmacy

Continued from page 1

"Even when shown examples of attractive CVS stores from other cities, they denied to the City Council they could do it here."

Bob Wicker, who is a 35-year resident of the Midway area and has been a long-time activist, said he has mixed feelings about the CVS building.

"I think it could have been more, but it is an improvement over what was there," he said. Wicker said he considers it to be the best-looking building that he

has seen in that location.

He said he also has mixed feelings over CVS management.

"I am pleased they invested in the Midway, but like so many other developers, they continue to disrespect this area," he said.

He said that he has learned that CVS is putting up a location on Grand Avenue, but it will be a mixed-use building with condos above.

"This is exactly what they said they could not do here," he stated.

"We who love the Midway and want to see it improve see the CVS building as not the right step," he added. "It is a nice building for a suburban site, but what makes sense in Shoreview or

Burnsville does not make sense in the inner city."

"I don't have anything against CVS as a business," Wicker added. "I haven't had the desire or the need to go there, but my wife has been in the store and she says it is a nice, clean setting with friendly people."

Wicker said he thought it was regrettable CVS is backed up on University Avenue. "They could have done so many things with partners in the community if they had just tried," he said.

"I am greatly disappointed with the Midway Chamber that just made a black and white issue out of it," he said. "I feel they have been derelict in their duty as a leader in bringing various parts

of the community together and decided to rubberstamp CVS just because it was a business."

"There must have been a strong business and neighborhood association on Grand Avenue that insisted CVS do a mixed-use building as a price of doing business," Wicker said.

Lori Fritz, Midway Chamber president, said she has been in CVS a few times as a customer and was present for its grand opening.

"It has been a long process working with that design," she said, "and it is easy for me to look back on it all, knowing where we ended up. The store could only have one door, related to how it is laid out, with the shelving, and

with the security concerns at a busy intersection like Snelling and University. Those were the reasons for the one door, and CVS would not give in on that."

Fritz said CVS made what they considered a major concession by building on the corner, rather than set back from the sidewalk. She said if the building had been set back, the door could have faced both Snelling and University.

"Things get so caught up in design issues," she said. "I don't know about the Grand Avenue site as far as size, but it is a completely different site, not at one of the busiest intersections in the

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*(Author's Note: The response to my November column about my difficulties with my stepdaughter was overwhelming. Many stepparents poured out their hearts and outlined their trials with their own stepchildren. Even though the statistics show at least 20 percent of children are in blended families, my editor and I were shocked by the number of e-mails I received. Knowing that there needs to be a place to discuss these experiences has moved us to devote this column to stepparenting and blending families. The new name of this column reflects our dedication to the created families, and the joys and troubles that come with them. I am looking forward to hearing from you, and hope by sharing our experiences, we can ease the journey just a little.)*



## Stepping In

By SHERRI MOORE

### Step-parenting: Readers respond

The column I wrote in November about my difficulties with my step-daughter has struck a chord with many of my readers. Some e-mailed me and told me of their difficulties. Two in particular stuck out.

A nice Irish girl wrote about her stepfather. They appeared to have a nice relationship on the surface, but underneath, she resented him for not getting along with her father. She felt her father wasn't being respected. If he didn't respect her father, then he didn't respect her. Her stepfather made an effort, and both fathers get along superficially. The family can now have gatherings where both are there. It's pretty free and easy now for this lovely girl who is raising her own kids. What a nice story of caring and civility.

She recommended that I try to bridge the gap with my stepdaughter's mother and my husband's sisters. Perhaps if I reach out, she writes, and use the wedding as an opportunity to "get together and work things out." The written word looks so nice. I could invite myself to my sister-in-law's for tea and bring some really pretty pastries. I could welcome Mr. M.'s ex-wife with open arms, compliment her on her outfit, and pull out her chair. We could talk small talk for a while, about mutual family and friends.

The thing is, I've done that. On several occasions, throughout the eight years of living in sunny California, in the same town, in the same circle of friends, in the same family. Each time I was met with faces of disbelief and the words, "I don't know what you're talking about" from his sisters and the look of utter hatred on his ex-wife's face just before she blew up and called me every rotten name you can think of, in both English and Finnish. She didn't think I knew the Finnish words, but I did. My young son told me he learned them from his Finnish cousins. I can't say her tirades were pleasant, but I can say they had no effect on me, except for when I questioned her sanity.

Over the years, there has been an uneasy truce worked out between my in-laws and myself... I first noticed it when they hugged me at a nephew's wedding and called me by my name. It's true their lips curved up like someone eating liver, but they tried. I accepted their unusual warmth and thought that my then-recent cancer scare had some effect on them. Later I found out that Mr. M., in typical Finnish fashion, had not shared my health issues with anyone. Maybe they thought it was time.

Mr. M.'s ex was at that same wedding, as was Krista. She spent the evening going back and forth, talking to us equally, trying to appease everyone. I felt very sorry for her. Her mother made it clear that she would not talk to us. I tried to

**The column I wrote in November about my difficulties with my step-daughter has struck a chord with many of my readers. Some e-mailed me and told me of their difficulties. Two in particular stuck out.**

approach her, but she turned and walked away. No yelling on her part was as good as it was going to get.

So, as it stands, the lovely Irish girl had a nice idea, but you can't make someone else act civilized, so the thaw cannot take place, unless I am pleasantly surprised.

Another e-mail I received was from a woman with a much worse situation. Her step-daughter is getting married, and has acted awfully bad to her father and his wife. Evidently, the girl has always been a problem, so naturally, with a wedding, the bad behavior has been ratcheted up.

Her intended husband, a man with his head in the sand, assists her with her bad behavior.

Luckily, this woman, Madam X, has several of her own children, all are in school and doing their best. So, she can have some peace with her own children. That gives her the fortitude to deal with her step-daughter who sounds like she has a major chip on her

shoulder. Madame X and her husband have been expected to pick up the major tab for the wedding, and fly the whole family to the out-of-state wedding and stay in a hotel, all the time acting like it's just a piece of cake. It sounds like her stepdaughter has been harboring horrendous feelings towards everyone for a very long time.

In an atmosphere like that, what kind of wedding is it going to be? Will the stepdaughter continue her tirade of cruel remarks on that day, or will she hold her tongue and act sweet? I think some people can act differently, but most of the time, they can't hold it in too long. I hope Madame X writes me after the wedding, so I can pass on to you how it went. I hope and pray they manage to get through it without much trouble.

So what can I do to keep Krista's wedding as wonderful as she hopes? I'll take the back seat if her mother shows up. I'll stand on the sidelines, dressed in a beautiful new suit, and smile sweetly as her mother takes center stage at the last possible minute. It doesn't matter to me that I'm not in the front pew at the service. I'll be in the second pew, surrounded by my son, little nephews, brother, sister-in-law, sister, and most of all, my wonderful husband.

I have tried to set a good mood by sending Christmas cards to his sisters and the rest of his family, signing the cards with "love." Yes, I'm a hypocrite, but there's a time when hypocrisy is a fine way to be. I will do everything I can for my little stepdaughter, (who's 5'7" but still looks like 3 feet tall to me.) Sometime before the wedding, I'll slip in to see her and fasten on her slim wrist, my Grandmother's wedding bracelet that has been worn by my mother and me at our weddings. I hope the spirit of my parents and my husband's parents will be there at the service.

Come to think of it, my parents will be at the reception, they never missed a good party.

Please e-mail with your suggestions and ideas, I'd love to receive more e-mails.

*(Sherri Moore is a freelance writer, who is a former resident of the Como neighborhood. She and her second husband are empty nesters, looking forward to the future. Sherri welcomes your comments and can be reached at sherrimoore92@msn.com.)*

As much as possible, my son Jonah and I like to stay optimistic about getting outdoors to get our exercise. I have mentioned here before his love of the outdoors, and even the bitter cold doesn't seem to phase him. These Minnesota winters are going to afford us many future years of sledding, skiing, and playing hockey. But for right now, it is sometimes just not prudent to venture out to get some fresh air.

So, now that the cold weather is upon us, I think it is important to talk about how we as well as our kids can stay active and fit when we are cooped up indoors. It is so easy to become content with all of our lazy, winter comfort activities: reading, art projects, puzzles, board games, and of course, our favorite cartoons. But we need to have a nice mix of active play activities so that kids can expel some of that kinetic energy that they have. Remember, their little bodies are growing each day and need lots of stimulation to encourage that growth.

So here is my top ten list of indoor wintertime activities to keep the family active:

1) Have a Ball: Find a spot where you and the kiddies can go to play indoor sports: basketball, volleyball, indoor tennis or kickball are all good fun.

2) Be the Belle of the Ball: Kids love music. Show them some of the ridiculous dance moves you knew when you were younger. They will laugh till they cry. Or

## New to the Neighborhood

By NATE HAMILTON

### The winter top ten

get them to bee-bop along with you: hula, tap, tango, salsa, and square dancing are all fun ways to cut a rug. Dress up, decorate the place and invite over a few friends. Or take up a dance class at your community or rec center.

3) Throw a Gutter Ball: Even the little ones love to bowl. Do your best Fred Flintstone impersonation and stop off at Midway Pro Bowl at 1556 University Avenue (near Snelling). They can equip you with some lane bumpers that can help you and the kids avoid "the gutter ball."

4) Make a Big Splash: Visit your local YMCA or rec center and go for a plunge. Last winter, we took a community education "water babies" class with Jonah that he really enjoyed; and it was a great way to introduce him to swimming.

5) Bring the Outdoors Inside: I recently cleared a path through the living and dining room and brought Jonah's tricycle indoors. I made sure no breakables or dangerous objects were in our track, and we proceeded to enact our version of the Indy 500. It was a great way to

burn off some energy in an activity that we usually can't enjoy indoors.

6) Do The Mall Stroll: Most malls and other shopping centers encourage mall walkers, be they senior citizens or stroller pushing moms and dads. Encourage your kids to walk with you and window shop. Stop off at the play area when you can.

7) Find Inner Peace: A friend recently told me she did a kid's Yoga tape with her toddler. They had fun stretching, rolling around, and doing silly chants.

8) Prepare for the Olympics: Jonah has also taken a kids tumbling class through community ed. He was particularly adept at the balance beam and somersaults. But you don't have to take a class—set up your mini-trampoline or just a pile of blankets and practice your floor routine.

9) The Java Train: Check out this new coffeehouse just west of Lake Como on Pascal. They have a two-story locomotive play area for the kids with a model train running around the top. Refuel with a hot cup of joe while the kids play conductor.

10) Insert your favorite activity here: I would love to hear from you, dear reader. If you have a good suggestion for a winter activity, let me hear it. I will publish the results next month in my One Year Anniversary Extravaganza! edition of "New to the Neighborhood." You can email me your ideas at nate@mdah.org.

## The Food Snob

Look on your cookbook shelf – way at the back – for the most stained and dog-eared volume. If you're over 40, it's likely to be the Moosewood Cookbook, or its sequel, the Enchanted Broccoli Forest. Back in the '70s, being a vegetarian was a political statement, a vote against the establishment, support for the hippie 'back to the land' movement. In those days, a wholesome dinner consisted of mung beans, brown rice and lots of melting cheese. The Moosewood Café in Ithaca, New York, was a leading proponent of the 'more is more' vegetarian cuisine and its recipes influenced cooks all across the country.

In the Twin Cities, the Moosewood style was manifested in a restaurant called The Good Earth. Rather than spend hours soaking beans and steaming brown rice, you could drop in for a Small Planet burger – leaving more time for peace demonstrations and such.

Eventually, the Good Earth was acquired by the folks who bring you Chino Latino, Figlio and other successful restaurants, and expanded to Uptown, Minnetonka, Edina and Roseville. Only the last two remain open, and like the rest of us, the Good Earth has changed with the times. The vegetarian patty hangs on, but you can also get burgers made of bison, salmon or 'all natural' beef.

Other holdouts from the old days include the adzuki bean tostadas and burritos, the almond tuna and the cashew chicken salads, and the vegetables with wild rice. New items on the menu (well, less than 20 years old anyway) include a variety of Asian-spiced stir-fries. Wraps are a decade-old addition, and the new millennium has brought with it a handful of nouveau concepts like the Spanish-influenced crab gazpacho.

As you can surmise, I've been eating at the Good Earth for years, and still grab for those whole wheat rolls as soon as they come to the table. Now they're served with trendy hummus and olive oil, but they taste best with ol' fashioned butter. These days I usually order the Joe's Beef and Eggs, which is taco meat on top of scrambled eggs, served with roasted potatoes. It's on the breakfast menu, but you can get it anytime. Sometimes, I revert back to my old standby, the whole wheat tostada filled with (you guessed it) beans.

I recently visited the Moosewood for the first time. It's still thriving, still owned by a cooperative and was absolutely excellent. Fresh, high-quality ingredients, carefully prepared and proudly served. In fact, I'd forgotten how good vegetables could taste. The Good Earth falls short of that mark. You don't savor the interplay of flavors and textures. You order a reliable old standby and get back to the office. But these days when chain restaurants have lowered the bar, the Good Earth still maintains a higher standard than most. And where else can you choose from seven items featuring beans as the main event?

## The Bachelor

A few months after I graduated



# Without Reservations

Don't forget the tea at The Good Earth

from college—still clinging to wide-eyed optimism for the life ahead – I did as so many foolish young men do and loaded everything I owned into a rusting old Honda and headed west. I landed in Boulder, Colorado, and proceeded to descend into a bizarre world where hippies-turned-yuppies emit toxic clouds of patchouli and Chanel, where vegans plaster PETA stickers on the back of their \$40,000 SUVs. Thankfully, the sweet kiss of a deer tick eventually sent me back to the land of stoic despondency and the Mayo Clinic. But it's what happened during my final day in the hippies' lair that burns in my memory and will forever steer me away from any flirtation with idealism.

I was standing at a bus stop (would I have taken an SUV to the co-op if I had the means? ... I do not know) and spied a portly, middle-aged man standing a few feet away. His hair was shaggy and shoulder length, his beard rustically unkempt and gross. Of course, he still sported the obligatory tie-dye T-shirt. But it was the enormous, homemade button pinned to his floppy, camo-green hat that haunts me to this day. It read, and I quote: "I eat algae. Ask me why."

I'm a little woozy from this flashback, let me catch my breath... OK, so what is the point of this story? My loathing of hippies, or at least those who still cling to their naïve self-righteousness. It may have all been well-intentioned way back during this ridiculous "summer

of love" you all seem so enamored with, but for the love of Mother Earth, people: Let...it...go!!!

For this reason, I want to despise the Good Earth. I really do. I want to seethe with resentment at everything and everyone it embodies, as any good Generation Xer would. But alas, I cannot. It's one of my favorite places to go for lunch. The food is almost universally good, good for you and well-portioned. And coming from a veritable font of cynicism like myself, that's saying something.

I have several favorite dishes at the Good Earth, but as of late I've been on a Salmon Hash Roaster kick, from the breakfast menu. It features a generous slab of salmon draped on roasted potatoes, with lots of veggies. And as I scoop that final forkful of diced peppers and onions into my mouth, I feel so good that I swear I can almost sense a deep, guttural longing for something better for this world swelling inside me. Wait, no, it's just gas.

## The Cheapskate

From cookbook critiques to adolescent bodily function humor, my colleagues clearly know how to capitalize on their intellectual strengths. For my contribution...perhaps a short literary reflection on my first encounter with the book "The Good Earth" in eighth-grade English class? But no, I will spare you the full force of that rude awakening for one raised on "the Littles" - Lit-

tle Women, the Little Colonel, Stuart Little, and Little House on the Prairie, and the like.

Let's go straight to the Good Earth – the restaurant, not the book. Neither of my colleagues appears to realize that it's All About the Tea. Ever since my college days, I have tried in vain to recreate Good Earth tea at home. It can't be done. You have to get it poured out of a steaming carafe, refreshed at least a dozen times over the course of a meal by a very attentive wait staff. And since Good Earth restaurants exist only in the Twin Cities and (where else) California, I say we should take full advantage while it lasts.

Yes, yes, before you start to lecture, I know all about brewing the tea in a drip coffeemaker dedicated exclusively to tea. But aside from my sporadic craving for this one tea, I have no room in my kitchen or my heart for any beverage-brewing apparatus that does not result in a tiny, steaming pitcher of crema-covered espresso. So when I need the Tea, I head for the Good Earth.

More evidence: The Good Earth's online presence seems to have migrated to a site called goodearthtea.com. You have to really dig to even find the restaurants listed there. So I repeat: It's All About The Tea. I only hope this cyber-move does not portend the closure of the restaurants.

As for food at the Good Earth, I always like something with eggs and oven-fried potatoes. I guess that doesn't have

much to do with hippies and health food, but there it is. The Vegetarian Joe breakfast plate (eggs and potatoes with spicy beans instead of taco meat) has never let me down.

However, on a recent dinner at the Good Earth, the Cheapskate was actually beaten at my own game by – who else – the Cheapskate's Sister. She ordered from the appetizer menu, choosing the Coastal Salmon Cake (served with fresh greens) and a wonderful tri-color corn chip basket with fresh tomato salsa, guacamole, and sweet corn/mango salsa. My rice-stuffed squash turned out to be stringy, with filling that tasted just a little too "healthy." Our other companion gave his plate of rice and beans a C-plus, but the tasty chips-and-salsa trio saved the day for all of us, at a very modest cost.


Bottom line from the Cheapskate: The best plates for your money at the Good Earth are found on the breakfast menu and the appetizer menu. And for goodness' sake, don't forget that It's All About the Tea.

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# Wilder Foundation proposes four-story building and parking ramp for new Lexington Park

By JANE MCCLURE

One of St. Paul's oldest social service agencies is getting a new home in the Lexington Park development. A site plan and height variance for Wilder Foundation's proposed four-story building and parking ramp won unanimous St. Paul Planning Commission approval December 16. Commission approval will be final as an appeal wasn't filed within a 10-day period.

The new Wilder Lexington Park building will house 320 full-time and part-time Wilder employees, said Wilder Vice President Craig Binger. The nonprofit community services agency, which was founded by the Amherst Wilder family, will observe its centennial in 2006.

"We have served the community for almost 100 years," said Binger. "We're pleased to be bringing some of our services to the hub of the communities we serve." The Lexington Park location is on a corner where the Lexington-Hamline, Hamline-Midway, Frogtown, Summit-University and Aurora-St. Anthony neighborhoods meet.

Wilder provides a wide range of services for children through senior citizens, as well as leadership training and community-building activities. The agency also operates housing programs and a nationally respected research program.

Wilder's building and parking ramp would occupy 3.2 acres of the site, along the Dunlap Street side of the property. The new building has been on the drawing boards for several months. It will allow the agency to consolidate its administrative offices and many of its services at one location.

Wilder's main headquarters is on a 13-acre on Lafond Avenue in Frogtown neighborhood. That site and others around Frogtown, Summit-University and other neighborhoods would be

freed up for sale and redevelopment after the new building opens its doors.

Longtime area residents might remember when Wilder's Frogtown site was occupied by the Home of the Good Shepherd, a home for wayward girls.

Binger said the Lexington-University site's proximity to transit is very important. The building's proximity to University Avenue bus service, as well as the future Central Corridor light rail or busway project, are touted as benefits for the new facility.



Many of Wilder's clients are transit-dependent. Wilder works with more than 10,000 clients per year. Many don't own motor vehicles and use transit.

University Avenue is home to the Twin Cities' busiest bus line, Route 16, as well as a rush hour express service.

Architect Doug Pierce of Perkins and Will Architects outlined building plans. The ell-shaped building will have 86,600 square feet of space. A four-level, 324-vehicle parking ramp will be southeast of the building. A driveway and drop-off area will separate the building and ramp.

The building and parking ramp design feature brown brick and precast stone that resembles Kasota Stone. Pierce said that is

meant to complement the Aldi and TCF buildings, which are also brick.

The building will have its main entrance facing north, onto a plaza and client parking area between Aldi and Wilder. There will also be entrances onto a south plaza and on the second floor for pedestrian access from Dunlap Street. The Wilder site is below the Dunlap Street grade by about 10 feet.

Lexington Park is a retail-office-residential development at the southwest corner of Lexing-

ton Parkway and University Avenue. Wellington Management is developing the property. An Aldi grocery store on University Avenue opened in November. A TCF Bank at Lexington and University just recently opened. Other plans for the 8.2-acre property call for senior housing and mixed-use commercial-retail at the site's south end.

The Wilder project has the support of the Lexington-Hamline Community Council and the Lexington Park Design Advisory Group. The advisory group is a committee made up of community members who review plans for the larger Lexington Park site.

The support is in contrast to the years of debate over how the corner should be redeveloped. A number of groups, including area district councils and University UNITED, have called for more dense, transit-oriented development of the property. Some community members have also objected to the lack of a master plan for the project, complaining that owner Wellington Management's approach of selling several separate parcels for redevelopment is too piecemeal in nature.

Wilder's plans have generated little debate in comparison to other aspects of the project. No one attended a December 8 Planning Commission Zoning Committee hearing to speak against Wilder. The building's high standard of design, use of attractive materials and attention to energy conservation have won praise from design advisory group members.

The building needs a height variance because it will be 58 feet or four stories tall on its north side. A wing of the building along Dunlap will be two stories high. The property's commercial zoning allows a maximum height of 44 feet, so a 14-foot variance is needed for the four-story section.

Tom Beach, who oversees site plan review for the city, said the building's height should not impact any neighbors, including those who would eventually live in the new housing to the south. Some community space for a small business or business will be on the first floor. The rest of the first floor and second floor will provide program and client space, with offices on the upper floors. Between the building and Dunlap will be a landscaped outdoor area for programs and activities. That area will be accessible to the general public at times but will be secured at night. The parking ramp will also be closed when Wilder is closed.

Despite Wilder's clients need for transit service, many people are expected to drive to the

building. That has raised concerns about traffic congestion, said Beach. The larger Lexington Park site currently has just two driveways, one on University and one on Lexington. Those are adequate to serve Aldi, a White Castle restaurant and TCF Bank. But a recent traffic study indicates that another site access point is needed to avoid adding to the area's traffic woes.

The Wilder complex will front onto two private streets that are part of Lexington Park, as well as on Dunlap. The design advisory group has discussed the possibility of a third east-west street to serve the southern part of the development. This street would be built south of Wilder's new facilities. Public Works staff is continuing to analyze alternatives for site access. Beach said that at a minimum, a private street to Dunlap must be provided.

Binger said Wilder agrees with the need for additional site street access. He said Wilder would work with Wellington on how any access would tie into redevelopment to the south. Episcopal Homes wishes to build senior housing on the site's southwest corner. Wellington is studying housing and possible mixed-use development on the southeast corner along Lexington.

The Zoning Committee agreed that if east-west street details cannot be resolved by Wilder, Wellington and the design advisory group, the plans be brought back to the committee for a recommendation.

One condition of site plan approval called for the construction of the private street. But Zoning Committee members said the final street site and other details of its construction shouldn't be decided until after the housing plans are developed and removed that condition. The Planning Commission didn't want Wilder to handle the responsibilities of a private street, but wanted Wellington to take on that responsibility.

The committee also asked that a staff recommendation on a north-south sidewalk be changed. City staff recommended a sidewalk be built along the north-south private street that would be used to access Lexington Park from University. But Binger questioned whether the sidewalk would be used by Wilder or by persons living in the new housing planned for the south. Wilder asked that the sidewalk be built on the east side of the north-south street, a condition the Planning Commission agreed to. It was agreed that the sidewalk would be used more by area residents rather than by Wilder clients.

Planning Commissioner Matt Anfang questioned placing the sidewalk on Wilder's side of the north-south private street. "It would be a sidewalk to nowhere," he said. Beach agreed that the sidewalk could be moved, but said that city staff want to keep options open in case the east side sidewalk cannot be built. "It will eventually lead to something," he said.

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# New Mayor Coleman inherits office, anxiety about Ford Plant's future

By JAN WILLMS

As new Saint Paul mayor Chris Coleman bit into a White Castle hamburger during one of his inaugural events at the Hubbs Center at 1030 University Avenue January 5, he said it brought back memories of when he was growing up and White Castle burgers were sometimes the dinner meal.

"It made me think of how much I needed a job," he said with a smile. "And that was a good thing."

Coleman looked out into a crowd of faces from a multitude of nationalities that gathered at the ESL and adult literacy center, and he talked about the inclusiveness and strength of diversity in a city of immigrants.

"I see the Saint Paul of the future," he said as he addressed the crowd. "The main word that will define these next four years is respect—respect for our histories, our present and our future."

Combining that respect with the importance of good jobs, Coleman reflected on the plight of the Ford Plant shortly following his speech. The Ford plant, faced with possible closure, has been a part of the past and present in Saint Paul, and he sees it as hopefully a part of its future.

"The hard part about the Ford plant is that it is a global decision," Coleman said.

"Ford has to assess its market," he added. "To the extent that we can provide any incentives to keep the plant open, we

will. We'll work to create alternative fuel sources, biodiesel or hybrid. We're going to try and help in any way we can."

County Commissioner Janice Rettman also expressed her concerns about the uncertain future of the Ford Plant.

She stated that she drives a Ford Ranger, made at the Saint Paul plant and purchased from Saxon Ford before it closed its doors.

"My vehicle uses flexible fuel, and I'm very proud to drive it," Rettman said. "I believe the Ford Plant must absolutely stay in Saint Paul. If there is a role for the county to play, I would welcome it."

Rettman cited the Ford Plant and Rock-Tenn, a struggling pa-



Bob Killeen, who has worked at the St. Paul Ford Plant since 1977, is optimistic that the plant will not be closing. (Photo by Terry Faust)

per company, as anchors of Saint Paul that are vital to the city's economy.

"When you've got these talented work forces, we have to do a full court press and try to keep them," she said.

As a member of the Ford Plant work force, Bob Killeen is in a position to feel the personal results of a closure of the plant.

The impact would be tremendous, according to Killeen, who works as a millwright in plant engineering.

"Every job in the Ford plant directly creates another seven jobs in parts manufacturing and shipping," said Killeen, who also serves as secretary-treasurer for Local 879 of the United Auto Workers Union.

"Indirectly, every job affects others in trucking and railroad shipping and the manufacture of shipping materials," he said. "The Ford plant has a huge impact."

Although Killeen, who has been with Ford since 1977, does not know what the future plans of the plant will be, he is optimistic that the Ford Motor Company on 966 Mississippi River Blvd. S. will not be closing.

"We don't know our status," he said. "A major restructuring announcement is scheduled in the latter part of January, and we'll find out if we'll be closing or building a new product. We really need a new product."

Killeen said the company started building LTD sedans and

F series pickup trucks but later went to Ranger production. The Ranger is a compact pickup.

"The Ranger was always a good product to build, and it sold like crazy for many, many years," Killeen said. "If the economy was going strong, the Ranger was selling well."

However, Killeen said the Ranger has not had a facelift for quite some time. "I'm sure that's contributing to the declining sales right now," he said. He said vehicle sales have dropped off in general for Ford and GM products, while Toyota and Honda report making record profits.

"The perception is that their quality is better, and at one point that was true, but the American manufacturers have caught up," he said.

Killeen said the plant builds 45 Rangers every hour. The workers also build Mazda B series; Ford partners with Mazda on some of its production.

Killeen said that at its peak, there were 1900 people working at the Ford plant. He said there has been some periodic idling of production over the years, but the worst was in the early 1980s and now.

"Right now our membership hourly is 1,775," Killeen said. "There are also about 150 salaried people working at the plant."

He said the local he belongs to was started in June 1941. Be

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



New Mayor Chris Coleman says the Ford plant has been a part of the past and present in Saint Paul, and he sees it as hopefully a part of its future. (Photo by Terry Faust)

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# In Our Community

## Organ recital at Jehovah Lutheran January 29

Jehovah Lutheran Church will host organist Jean Boehler of New York in a recital on Sunday, January 29, at 4 p.m. Boehler's performance will offer seasonal music for Christmas and Epiphany along with major works by J. S. Bach, Dietrich Buxtehude, and other masters of the organ.

The public is invited to the recital, generously supported by friends of the Fine Arts Program at Jehovah. There is no admission charge. Jehovah Lutheran Church is located on Snelling at Thomas. For more information call 651-644-1421, e-mail [jehovahlutheran@msn.com](mailto:jehovahlutheran@msn.com), or visit [www.JehovahLutheran.org](http://www.JehovahLutheran.org).

## Environmental group formed, meets Jan. 18

Community members in Hamline-Midway Neighborhood recently formed an environmental group for the community. We will be meeting every 3rd Wednesday of the month at the Hamline-Midway Coalition Building located at 1564 Lafond Ave. The next meeting is January 18 from 7-8:30 p.m. Various environmental topics are being discussed, including the planters on Snelling Avenue and how to maintain them. All are welcome to attend.

## Adult study addresses "Aloneness" issues

A video entitled "I Feel So Alone" sets the theme for a 5-week Adult Study of aloneness issues in our society which began January 8 at Jehovah Lutheran Church, corner of Snelling and Thomas. The Adult Study will continue Sunday mornings at 9:15 a.m.

Feeling alone in illness, in death, in unplanned pregnancy, in violent situations, as challenged

teens will be examined from on Sundays through Feb 5th. Leaders include Mary Benke, president of the Lutherans for Life chapter, and Sarah Legband, Dean of Women at the Teen Challenge program. A video by Tony Compolo will jumpstart the discussion of capital punishment.

The studies are designed to help one "grow more aware for prayer and care!" The community is invited to participate. The class meets in the church library/lounge just to the right of the Thomas Street entrance.

## Winter Storytimes at Hamline Midway Library

The Hamline Midway Branch of the St. Paul Public Library will be offering winter storytimes beginning in mid January. The toddler and preschool storytime will be held on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. from January 18 through February 22.

Bedtime storytime will not begin until February. It will be offered for preschool and early elementary-aged children on Tuesdays at 7 p.m. from February 7 through March 14. All children are encouraged to wear their pajamas and bring a favorite bear or blanket to storytime. Both storytimes will include storytelling, songs, fingerplays, and much more.

Pre-registration is requested, but is not required. For more information or to register for storytime, please contact the Hamline Midway Branch Library at 651-642-0293.

## Winter Carnival Orchid Show Jan. 28 & 29

Frigid January weather, outdoor winter activities, and the snow and ice of the Saint Paul Winter Carnival does not deter the Orchid Society of Minnesota and the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory from joining together to create the one tropical event of the Winter Carnival celebration. The Conservatory is transformed for the Winter Carnival

Orchid Show into a tropical wonderland where instead of King Boreas, Orchids rule! The Winter Carnival Orchid Show is open to the public from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, January 28 and 29.

## Open House hosted at MMSA February 2

Maternity of Mary-St. Andrew School will host an Open House on Thursday, February 2, from 6-8 p.m. Prospective students and their families are encouraged to attend. There will be classroom visits, special displays, performances and a chance to meet the staff.

The open house is just one of many activities going on during the annual Catholic Schools Week. The Catholic Schools week kick-off Mass will be held at Maternity of Mary Church on Saturday, January 28, at 4:30 p.m. This year's theme is "Catholic Schools: Character, Compassion, Values."

The public is invited to attend a special talk by Dr. Steve Kahn on "Parenting to Prevent Problems." The lecture will be held on Thursday, January 12, at 6:30 p.m. in MMSA's O'Donnell Hall.

MMSA School is located at 592 West Arlington Avenue in Saint Paul. The school serves children preschool through grade 8.

## Twin Cities German Immersion openings

Twin Cities German Immersion School has openings for kindergarten and first grade in 2006. Information sessions on January 26, 7 p.m., February 12th at 2 p.m. and on February 23, 7 p.m. at 1399 Eustis Street in Saint Paul. Tours offered most Wednesdays. A metro area open enrollment public charter school educating bilingual children for an international future. More info at [www.germanschool-mn.org](http://www.germanschool-mn.org). Contact us at 651-492-7106 or [info@germanschool-mn.org](mailto:info@germanschool-mn.org).

## Kindergarten Round-Up at Central Lutheran

A is for applesauce that we make. C is for our car paintings. U is for underwater kindergarten (no air masks required!) Kindergarten round-up at Central Lutheran School will be held on Thursday, January 26, at 7 p.m. Central offers lots of fun at our Christ centered, success oriented, full day kindergarten. Central has reading and writing readiness, hands on math and science, Jesus time, social studies, music, and gym.

Central also offers before and after school care from 6:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. You and your prospective kindergartner are invited to join us at Central Lutheran School, 775 N. Lexington Pkwy. for our kindergarten round-up. New families receive \$300 off of their kindergarten tuition. Please call us at 651-645-8649 to let us know you are coming or to ask any questions you may have.

## Local history group forming in Hamline Midway

The Hamline Midway History Corps is a new group for those with an interest in neighborhood history.

An informational meeting and mini-workshop will be held on Saturday, January 28 from 2-3:30 p.m. at the historic Hamline Playground Building on Snelling & Lafond Avenues (lower level, enter from the parking lot).

The mini-workshop, "Researching Your Home's History," will be presented by History Corps co-founder Kristi Mather. For more information, visit <http://www.HamlineMidwayHistory.org> or call Phil Reinhardt at 763-218-6604.

The Hamline Midway History Corps is a project of Leadership in Support of Neighborhood (LISN), a collaboration of the Hamline Midway Coalition and Hamline University.

## Reading by Hearth at the Hamline Midway Library

The Fireside Literary Series returns for its 12th year on six consecutive Thursday nights starting January 19 at the Hamline Midway Branch Library, 1558 West Minnehaha Avenue. Warm your heart and enliven your spirits as some of Minnesota's best writers share their works during cozy fireside readings sponsored by The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library. The programs begin at 7 p.m. and are accompanied by coffee, cookies and book signings.

Find out the next chapter in the lives of beloved characters from The Cape Ann when Faith Sullivan reads from her new novel, *Gardenias*, on January 19. Set as the United States enters World War II, Sullivan's characters are on the brink of new lives, with new dreams and risks ahead.

The *Silence of the Loons* features stories from some of the best mystery writers Minnesota has to offer. Three of them are part of the Minnesota Crime Wave—Carl Brookins, Ellen Hart and William Kent Krueger—and they share selections from the new book on January 26.

Joining the Fireside line-up on February 2, Gregory Blake Smith reads from his new novel, *The Madonna of Las Vegas*. Amid the neon glow of Vegas, protagonist Cosmo's life is turned upside down and inside out during the hair-raising countdown to the new millennium.

A celebrated children's author, John Coy reads from his debut novel on February 9. *Crackback* centers on Miles Manning, and the hits he takes on and off the football field drive this gripping story.

The Fireside series is sponsored by The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library and Micawber's Books. For more information on the remaining programs in February, contact The Friends at 651-222-3242 or visit [www.the-friends.org](http://www.the-friends.org).

## New mayor

Continued from page 7

sides the Ford plant, the local represents 35 people at Ford's distribution center in Menomonie, WI, and 75 people at Johnson's in Hudson, WI, a company that manufactures the seats for the Ford products. Killeen said some subcontractors, truckers and railroad personnel are represented by other unions.

Killeen said the production staff works four ten-hour days in two shifts. "We aren't bashful about our benefit packages, and the production people work pretty hard and earn some pretty good money," he said.

"Our work force is probably the number one force in North America," Killeen added, "and because of that, I think we're going to

get a new product to work on. Ford recognizes that they've got a really good work force here, and a union leadership team that's willing to work with them on streamlining the productive process and increasing productivity."

He said that at union membership meetings held recently, the union president returned from a trip to Detroit and tried to reassure the membership that the St. Paul plant is not on any closing list, at least not until 2009.

But regardless of the reassurance, Killeen said that there is a great deal of anxiety at the Ford plant. "You can't walk through there without hearing it," he said. "We are just told we are not supposed to go by the media reports."

Killeen said the workers are bombarded with articles in the newspaper on an almost daily basis citing possible scenarios of the

future with Ford.

"We try and quell as much as we can, but we don't know a heck of a lot, either," Killeen said.

Killeen is one of many workers at Ford who have been employed there for generations. He said his father, Leroy Robert, worked with the company from 1949 until 1989.

"He first worked in the body shop and then for the international union," Killeen said. "My brother John is a bargaining committeeman for the local union, and my brother Dan is an air tool technician."

Killeen went on to say that Ford has provided a comfortable and stable living over the years.

"In 2002, we had a \$130 million payroll just at this plant," he said. He said the plant itself is probably the most technologically advanced in the state of Min-

nesota.

He added that the technology that has come in has provided the biggest change he has seen in his years of working at Ford. He admits that part of that technology has eliminated some jobs.

However, he said that manufacturing as a whole has suffered in the United States, starting with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

"Expanding all these other trade agreements has decimated our industry," he said.

Killeen said that auto making is a highly skilled trade, but that does not mean it can't be done overseas.

"I think the plan is to get rid of manufacturing in this country, but no one wants to admit it," he said.

Killeen said that right now, Thailand is the number one pro-

ducer of light trucks for Ford.

"The only thing keeping them out of our market is the 25 per cent tariff on all Thai pickup trucks imported," he added. "President Bush wants to lift the tariff. We hope it won't be brought up in the 2006 session of Congress."

Killeen said he believes that if that tariff were ever lifted, it would probably end all small pickup production in the United States.

"Unless something is done to correct the trade agreements, I see manufacturing on a decline until it doesn't exist anymore," he said.

Despite his concerns for the future, however, Killeen sees a strong likelihood that the local Ford plant will continue.

"There just seems to be an inclination in the public to buy things that are not American-made," he said. "I just wish people would buy American."



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# Anchor Bank announces plans to build two-story bank at Snelling and Concordia

By JANE MCCLURE

Snelling Avenue and the tiny Snelling-Hamline neighborhood may be in line for one new bank and one relocated bank. Anchor Bank has announced plans to build a new two-story, 15,000 square-foot facility at the southeast corner of Snelling and Concordia avenues. Last fall the bank purchased the former Citgo service station and Malt Shop restaurant properties. The properties were fenced off in early December to prepare for demolition and construction of the new bank.

The expansion of Anchor Bank is part of an ambitious plan by that company to add one or two new sites each year. Those moves are being watched by competitors, including Snelling-Hamline neighbor Associated Bank.

Associated Bank, which is currently located at Selby and Snelling, is considering its future operations in the community. Associated owns and operates the former Liberty State Bank, which has been in the neighborhood since 1917. One possibility bank officials are exploring is that of building a new facility on land the bank owns in the Snelling-Hamline neighborhood. The bank owns about five acres.

Of the two banks, Anchor is likely to break ground first. Anchor Bank opened a small storefront bank on Snelling Avenue just south of Selby in summer 2005, in preparation for a larger-scale move to the community.

Jeff Hawkins, president of Anchor's St. Paul and West St. Paul charters, said the move to the Midway area is a natural fit for Anchor

Bank. "We've always had a bank in downtown St. Paul, and in the overall scheme of things, expanding to the Midway area makes sense."

Anchor Bank officials hope to open a new facility here in a year, after going through require city review processes. Hawkins said Anchor will occupy the entire first floor of the planned building, with space available for tenants for part of the second floor. The bank is responding to Ward One Council

Member Debbie Montgomery's request that the bank include a community meeting room.

The bank plans will need city staff site plan as well as St. Paul Planning Commission review and approval for its drive-through facilities. Hawkins said that the former Citgo station property has already been the focus of extensive environmental cleanup and that further cleanup isn't expected to be an obstacle to the project.

Anchor's new location, which

overlooks Interstate 94, is seen as ideal for prospective new retail customers. Not only will it provide easy access, it also will be highly visible. Hawkins said a focus for the bank will be small businesses, which are plentiful throughout the surrounding neighborhoods. "That's what really attracted us to the area," he said.

Small business owners want banks that are convenient to their businesses, Hawkins said. "We believe we'll be able to offer that type of convenience at this location."

The Snelling-Hamline bank will be Anchor's 16th Twin Cities location. But although the bank may be relatively new to the neighborhood, customers will see some familiar faces. Local branch manager Jim Affolter is a 29-year employee of Liberty State Bank. He's working with Julie Novak, another former Liberty employee, at the current Snelling-Selby location. Other hires from Liberty expected to have a presence at a new Anchor Bank are Cecily Spencer, Joan Peper and Nicole Tillander.

Anchor will be moving to a site that is just south of Bremer and American banks on Snelling near University Avenue. It is also in an area served by a number of banks including Park Midway, Western, University, Wells Fargo, Highland, TCF and U.S. Bank. TCF is building two new banks in the area, one on Lexington Parkway south of University and one at Ford Parkway and Cretin Avenue.

John Kimball, president and CEO of Associated Bank Minnesota, said his bank welcomes competition in the area. Kimball notes that Associated Bank is weighing

its options for a new facility here. "We hope to announce a decision within the next two or three months," he said.

Associated Bank is "very committed" to staying in the neighborhood, Kimball said. Associated is the successor to Liberty State Bank, which opened its doors at Selby and Snelling in 1917. Associated came into the neighborhood after acquiring First Federal Capital Corporation and Liberty in 2004.

In recent weeks Associated Bank officials have been looking at the existing facility and how Associated can continue to serve the community. The building housed a meeting hall as well as the bank and other small businesses.

In the 1970s the brick building was sheathed in weathered wood with a rock stucco on the ground floor. Although that look was popular more than 30 years ago it is dated today. "It's a great old building," Kimball said. Bank officials are considering whether to remove the exterior materials and restore the building's original appearance.

Inside the building there are a number of deferred maintenance issues that have to be dealt with, such as worn carpeting. The original bank building was added onto over the years and some additions haven't aged well.

Much of Associated Bank's property in Snelling-Hamline neighborhood is north of the current bank, along Snelling between Selby and Marshall avenues. The property includes a former service station that has served as the Youth Express Program's Express Bicycle Shop for more than a decade.



Anchor Bank has announced plans to build a new two-story, 15,000 square-foot facility at the southeast corner of Snelling and Concordia avenues. Last fall the bank purchased the former Citgo service station and Malt Shop restaurant properties.

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## CVS Pharmacy

Continued from page 3

state. It is hard to compare Snelling and University with Lexington and Grand. There were also a lot of challenges to the ground underneath the building." Fritz said that putting apartments above a building at such a high-traffic intersection next to a nightclub might not have worked well, either.

the opportunity to look at the inside of the store, or take much notice of the signage.

He said a large pharmacy chain is definitely a threat if you look at the number of independent drug store dealers that remain.

"This is true in a lot of areas of retail, however," he said. "The same thing is happening with hardware stores and restaurants - it's just the way of life."

Beeson said the smaller pharmacies will remain important to those customers who connect strongly with their pharmacists. "A relationship with a good phar-

Howard Paster, a co-owner of Paster Enterprises, an agency that works with shopping center development, said that he could see both sides of the issue that the CVS location invokes.

"The neighbors are upset because there is not more density on the site, or enough was not done to integrate that piece and make it more than it is," Paster said. "Everyone always wants things that are beautiful in their community."

He added, however, that he could understand the point of view of CVS. "They are saying this is their prototypical location for a drive-thru pharmacy, they will work with the community as much as they can, and put their front door wherever."

Paster said it comes down to dollars and cents.

He said the neighborhood, if unhappy, could raise funds and buy the property themselves and make more of a mixed-use building.

"I'm sure CVS paid a lot of money for that corner and is able to make it work with just their store there," he said.

"It's different on Grand," Paster said. "It's a much larger and comprehensive development and probably some sort of zoning restriction that would not allow for a drive-thru pharmacy. There is also a lot of traffic density on Snelling, and it's a completely different market."

Paster said he was also struck by the fact that he sees so many old and run-down buildings on University Avenue.

"I would think people would want to encourage more sites like CVS, that involve cleaning up the area," he said. "Across the street, some of the buildings are screaming to be rehabbed."

macist is not unlike one with your doctor or veterinarian," he said.

He said that for those customers who do not have that relationship but look for stores offering cheaper prices and greater selections, the bigger chains will attract them.

However, based on a recent *Star Tribune* article by John Ewoldt, bigger stores do not necessarily always offer cheaper prices. He cited a report in which generic Cipro was \$19 at Costco and \$198 at CVS. He said that even with a CVS discount program that can save up to 40 per cent, the difference is still more than \$100 on one drug.

**"University is a more important thoroughfare than Snelling, and this is like turning your backside to University."**

- Steve Kufus

"The worst part of their project is that it precluded the possibility of assembling a larger development site including the adjacent empty lots on Sherburne," McMahon said.

According to Rick Beeson, president of Park Midway Bank, Midway Chamber member and a past board chair himself, CVS has been somewhat improved with how it sits on the property.

"A compromise resulted in improvement over what was originally planned," he said. "It's an enhancement over the furniture store and bank that were there before."

Beeson said he has not had

January is a time to reflect on the past year and to project hopes onto the coming year. The local urban landscape provided a diverse range of characters, but the birds played the prominent roles in my columns of 2005: trumpeter swans on Como Lake, clever American crows, ringneck pheasants in the alley, faithful Northern cardinals, nesting Eastern bluebirds, and tough little goldfinches.

For the coming year, good health is at the top of the list for my New Year's wishes to loved ones and for myself. Despite all these good wishes, I'm suffering from a tenacious head cold that has had my sinuses working overtime for over a month. In the process I've lost my sense of smell, a condition known as anosmia.

Worse things could happen, but since I lost this sense I realized how often I've used smells to describe the natural world. From the decaying autumn smells of stinkhorn fungi and rotting ginkgo fruits to the heady spring perfume of flowering basswood and apple trees, it's all good. To use a visual metaphor, smells add color to an otherwise black and white world.

The upper area of the nasal cavity, a mere 4 square centimeter area no bigger than the tip of a thumb, is where all our smell receptors are found. When we humans draw a breath through our noses, our olfactory receptors take in the chemical information and with that information we are able to detect up to a thousand distinct smells. By comparison, my big nosed bull terrier has olfactory receptors on



# Neighborhood Naturalist

By DEB ROBINSON

## Only the nose knows

a 150 square centimeter area. I can't conceive of what her canine smellavision world must be like.

Smell is believed to be our most primitive sense. We all know how a smell can instantly travel through our subconscious

mind and trigger a specific vivid memory right down to our original emotions. None of our other senses can do that.

Many animals use and perceive smells in different ways from humans and it's not always a matter of intensity. For example, a female butterfly uses the taste and smell receptors on her feet to find the right species of plant to lay her eggs on. She may even be able to detect the health of the plant by smell.

Fish that live in cloudy water usually have a heightened sense of smell, but imagine being a catfish with smell receptors all over your body. Many animals, including fish, also use their sense of smell to migrate, to signal alarm, and to find mates. And scent is liberally used in the animal world to mark territory as any dog or cat owner can confirm.

Some plants manufacture toxic chemicals and then use strong scents to warn herbivores of their toxicity. Conversely, some of those same plants lure pollinating insects into their service by producing sweet smelling flowers. Unlike many other animals, I could survive without my sense of smell, but it would be a duller life.

When I was sick in bed, all these thoughts went through my stuffy head. For a few days I kept

a cough drop on my nightstand just in case I needed it in the middle of the night. A few days into my ordeal I noticed a small Asian ladybug had taken up residence on my nightstand. Ladybugs prefer to eat aphids out in the summer garden, but I guess a sugary cough drop will do in the dead of winter. The ladybug comes and goes guided by smell because it always finds its way back to the nightstand even in the dark.

I yearn to be well enough again to go explore the snowy landscape and to walk my nosy dog around the frozen lake. Until then I'll listen to the chickadees sing outside my window, taste the honey in my tea, feel the soft ears of the dog at my knee, and admire the beauty of the lilies in a vase on the table—hopefully, I'll soon be able to admire their fragrance as well.


My New Year's resolution for 2006: When my ability to smell returns, I promise to never take my sense of smell for granted again.

Endnotes: \*Como Park Zoo and Conservatory Botanical Art classes return in January. An eight session class for both nature and art lovers, "A Naturalist's View of Art History," starts Jan. 23 and will be taught by Don Luce, illustrator and Bell Museum curator. To register for this class or other art classes, call: 651-487-8272. \*The not-to-be-missed Winter Carnival Orchid Show is Jan. 28 & 29, and the Winter Flower Show begins Feb. 3 - so head over to the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory and thaw out. For conservatory info call: 651-487-8200. \*To contact this writer: dmrobinson@bitstream.net



Illustration by Deb Robinson

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