



Hill & Lake Press

‘Where the biggies leave off...’

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

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OPINION

By David Hartwell

STATE POLICYMAKERS AIM TO GUT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS TO PERMIT MINNEAPOLIS TO PROCEED WITH 2040 PLAN WITHOUT OVERSIGHT

Care about clean water, fresh air, green space and thriving parks, access to sunlight and maintaining the healthy environment we now enjoy in Minneapolis? Last minute legislation at the State Capitol threatens to derail a successful challenge to the 2040 Plan that was based on its negative environmental impacts.

Last month's issue of the Hill & Lake Press highlighted one of the most important issues facing our city in the coming years: the impact of the Minneapolis 2040 Plan and its extensive upzoning of our residential neighborhoods to promote indiscriminate, high-density development — with no consideration of the environmental impacts.

While most of us are sympathetic to the aesthetic, historic preservation and quality of life concerns addressed in the front page editorial in the February issue, those problems are part and parcel of the larger problem with the 2040 Plan: its damage to the environment and livability of our city.

The city failed the environment.

Throughout the 2040 planning process, the city of Minneapolis failed to perform any environmental impact study of the proposed plan. The result is a plan that will, among other problems (1) increase pollution of already impaired city lakes and streams, (2) cause more frequent and severe flooding, (3) increase air pollution, (4) decrease green space and wildlife habitat, (5) increase visual and noise pollution in what are now relatively quiet res-

idential areas, (6) eliminate light and air to adjacent properties, (7) increase the regional urban heat island effect and (8) increase pressure on aging infrastructure, such as electricity, sewer and water. Much of this environmental damage is tied to widespread, indiscriminate high-density development that decreases green space, and to failure to account for the city's realistic traffic management needs in the coming decades.

Based on these likely impacts, several environmentally minded organizations joined together in 2018 to sue the city for failing to comply with the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA), the state's flagship environmental law. As of now, we're winning.

In fact, the city has not even attempted to defend the 2040 Plan as being environmentally sound; its only argument has been that MERA doesn't apply to comprehensive plans and the city can just ignore it. In 2021, the Minnesota Supreme Court rejected this argument, ruling that MERA gives environmental groups the right to sue Minneapolis for failing to complete an environmental review before approving the 2040 plan. Subsequently the district court ruled in our favor, issuing an injunction that barred implementation of the 2040 Plan. That injunction is now on hold, however, pending a further appeal by the city and more action by the district court. If we are successful — which we believe we will be — the injunction should be reinstated, and the city will be required to perform an environmental analysis and adjust the

"By upzoning most of the city but at the same time not providing any funding for or requirement of affordable housing, the plan has the perverse effect of removing the most affordable housing in the city and redeveloping it into market rate housing."

2040 Plan accordingly.

All this progress threatens to be undone by a bill, HF2004/SF2159, recently introduced by Rep. Sydney Jordan (60A) and Sen. Omar Fateh (62), metropolitan-area Minnesota legislators who have obviously been influenced by city officials. The bill attempts to legislatively override the successful environmental suit by exempting Minnesota cities from complying with MERA, retroactive to 2018, when the 2040 Plan was unveiled.

The irony here is thick.

The 2040 Plan was presented to the public as a strategy for mitigating the impacts of climate change,

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La Mexicana Supermercado on Lake Street (Photo Susan Lenfestey)

Everyone's Entitled to My Opinion: Two Tales of a City, Part 1

By Susan Lenfestey

In early February Hill & Lake Press editor Craig Wilson and I joined a group of people from the Woman's Club of Minneapolis for a bus tour of Lake Street, led by former Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, now CEO of the Minneapolis Foundation.

We were curious to see what has been happening in the area that was most heavily hit in the riots after the murder of George Floyd. And what better lens to view it through than that of a man who knows the city well and has helped steer millions of dollars to the renewal effort? (Who, full disclosure, is also a friend.)

The route took us up Nicollet Avenue, aka Eat Street, where R.T. expounded on the great food to be had in the small ethnic restaurants that have taken root there and pointed out the site of a new food court, soon to be opened by veteran restaurateurs Lina Goh and John Ng, who received a \$750,000 Main Street revitalization grant toward their several-million-dollar renovation of a century-old building at 28th Street and Nicollet Avenue.

As the bus detoured around the former Kmart building, which has blocked Nicollet Avenue between 29th Street and Lake Street since 1977, R.T. detoured from his preternaturally positive point of view to note that it was probably the one building on Lake Street that should have burned down!

Kmart is long gone, and the derelict building was scheduled for demolition in 2020, but because two post offices in the neighborhood were torched by arsonists in the post-murder mayhem, the United States Postal Service is currently leasing space in the building while a new post office is under construction.

We turned onto Lake Street, crossed under I-35 and began the heart of the tour.

R.T. praised the neighbors who turned out early every morning to sweep up glass after the nights of vandalism, and the huge outpouring of financial support from corporations, foundations and individuals. He spoke of the incredible bond formed among the small business owners, many of them immigrant and first generation entrepreneurs, who have committed to a future on Lake

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Sunset Over Cedar Lake (Photo Tim Sheridan)



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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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Our goal is to offer readers diverse perspectives on newsworthy events or issues of broad public concern to the Hill & Lake community.

Multiplexes Coming to a Lot Near You

Many neighbors were shocked to find out that the new zoning regulations adopted in conjunction with the 2040 plan allow historic single family, duplex and triplex homes in many parts of the city to be torn down and replaced with box-like multiplexes, effectively ruining the character and fabric of our neighborhoods. The city's response is that multiplexes are part of the 2040 Plan adopted in 2019, so no one should be surprised. The truth is that many (if not most) are, in fact, very surprised.

The 2040 Plan seemed to allow triplexes and only contemplate multiplexes as an exception to be built on the few "larger lots" that could accommodate them best. What is hard to understand is that what the city considers a "larger" lot has decreased in size several times so that many, if not most, of the lots in our neighborhood qualify as "larger lots" and are therefore eligible for large multiplex buildings with all of the issues that such large buildings entail. In fact, there are nearly 3,500 such lots. It looks as if the exception has become much more the rule.

At the same time, the city also removed the limit on the number of units that can be built on a larger lot. On slightly larger lots, six, eight, ten or more units are now allowed. The changes affect 3500 lots in historic neighborhoods in our city and were adopted by the city with little public debate.

These changes were not in the 2040 Plan, but are changes the city is now proposing, claiming that they are nothing new. They are new. The lot size for a "larger lot" should never have been decreased to equal the size of almost half the lots in our neighborhoods and the city is not compelled to eliminate ratios limiting the number of units per lot for multiplexes. For example, triplexes are effectively required to have only 2,000 SF per unit. If you care about preserving the character of our neighborhoods and think the city should rethink these changes, please voice your opinion before March 26.

Karin Birkeland, Lowry Hill

Taken Aback by February 2040 Plan Editorial

I'm a renter in the East Isles neighborhood and I've lived here for almost two years after moving to Minnesota upon graduating from St. Olaf College.

I was excited to receive the Hill & Lake Press the other day, however the front page editorial co-written by you (Craig Wilson) and Marty Carlson was quite a shock for me. I'm a bright-eyed recent grad who is intrigued by urban planning and has eyes on the Humphrey School, and admittedly am still learning the history of the Twin Cities' urban design (I see you have a Master's of Urban and Regional Planning degree). However, I was taken aback by some of the arguments in the article. I didn't see anywhere online to have a conversation with other readers, so I figured I'd email you, the newspaper editor and writer of this article, with my questions and reactions. I'd love it if you took the time to read and respond.

I think that the existing apartment complexes on Humboldt especially are

a testament to the city's ability to build multi-unit housing that matches the design of the neighborhood. The beautiful brownstone buildings compliment the large single-family homes in these neighborhoods. Who says that new 4-plexes will not be able to be developed with a similar design?

Awesome that about half of the rental properties are under the affordable threshold. Why, then, prevent more affordable housing from being built in this gorgeous neighborhood? What is the worry with making housing available to a larger audience? That it won't visually match the vibe? I'm having trouble understanding that argument.

"Our complaint is that the proposed zoning plan... treats the city as a featureless slate on which zoning is wielded as a blunt and indiscriminate instrument, implemented with little consideration of the historic and existing character of individual neighborhoods." What is the historic and existing character of East Isles? I didn't know that these neighborhoods were a historic district when I moved here or since living here the past two years, and after looking it up it looks like there's only a small portion of the three of these neighborhoods that is actually considered historic. You made it seem like the entirety of the neighborhoods should not be zoned in this way because of their "historic nature."

Really, I'm just afraid of what the new version of redlining will be for Minneapolis-St. Paul. I fear the transition from discriminating against race (such as destroying the Rondo neighborhood with the construction of I-94) to discriminating against class (which, inextricably tied to race, is really the same thing) by preventing affordable housing to be built in certain neighborhoods. I admit to not knowing all the intricacies behind how affordable housing is ensured in a given zoning district, however I'd hope that our City's urban planners could figure that out.

I look forward to participating in more East Isles activities to make sure my voice is heard, as I'd love to hold conversation over these ideas with others in the area.

Kiernan Bartlett, East Isles

And Now a Word from the City of Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee

This just in from the Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee regarding the latest version of the Cedar-Isles Park Board Plan:

"The Pedestrian Advisory Committee (PAC) supports many aspects of the Plan for Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles and believes that an improved design remains possible... Before addressing the design elements of the plan, *it is imperative to address a community engagement process that permits those with wealth and privilege to perpetuate a destructive, collapsing status quo and to demand that they control public land regardless of public good.*"

That's a direct quote, emphasis ours. The PAC Resolution also stresses the importance of having vending machines at every park "welcome point." You can read the full document, which appears on City of Minneapolis letterhead, by contacting 311 or visiting the City's website.

Lori Mittag, Kenwood

I continue to love this paper!

Most of the articles contain common sense thinking regarding the redo of Hennepin Ave., Lake of the Isles and Cedar plans, the bike lobby and the 2040 plan. Thank you Craig Wilson, Marty Carlson, Susan Lenfestey, Mary Pattock and Carol Becker for making your articles so clear and informative.

Roselyn Rezac, Bryn Mawr

Feedback on 2040 Plan Editorial

Your most recent article regarding Minneapolis 2040 is full of factual errors. The most obvious being that Minneapolis 2040 built form regulations went into effect January 1, 2021, and so the Interior 2 designation is not new. UN2 designation is not up-zoning, its simply the land use zoning district associated with the previously applied Interior 2 built form zoning district.

Tyler Richards, Kenwood

The City's Planning Department sent this unusually long Letter to the Editor that exceeds our normal copy limit. We decided to run it in full as an exception.

City Response to Last Month's Editorial about the 2040 Plan

Minneapolis adopted its 2040 Comprehensive Plan (Minneapolis 2040) which went into effect in January 2020. The Plan identifies high level goals and a vision for the future of Minneapolis, including the built form and land use guidance. Among other things, a city's comprehensive plan enacts future land use guidance, which provides a general vision for the future development of all parcels within a city. In the case of Minneapolis 2040, the plan broke the future land use guidance into two sections and adopted two separate but inter-related maps, the Future Land Use Map and the Built Form Map. <https://minneapolis2040.com/topics/land-use-built-form/>

Minneapolis 2040 created 12 new future land use categories. The Future Land Use Map guides the types of uses allowed on a given parcel according to each category. The Built Form Map guides the scale of development for every parcel in the city, independent of the uses allowed on the site. The built form of all new and remodeled buildings must be consistent with the guidance of the Built Form Map. There are 14 Built Form designations. The Built Form Map works in tandem with the Future Land Use Map to provide a complete set of guidance for each parcel.

The residential areas around Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles have a Future Land Use guidance of Urban Neighborhood. The Urban Neighborhood Future Land Use designation is assigned to the vast majority of residential properties throughout the City.

1) Urban Neighborhood – A predominantly residential area with a range of allowed building types. May include small-scale institutional and semi-public uses (for example, schools, community centers, religious institutions, public safety facilities, etc.) scattered throughout. Like the Neighborhood Mixed Use category, commercial uses can continue serving their existing commercial function. Commercial zoning is appropriate for these properties, while expansion of commercial uses and zoning into surrounding areas is not en-

couraged.

The residential areas around Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles have a Built Form designation of either Interior 1 or Interior 2.

1) Interior 1 – The Interior 1 district is typically applied in parts of the city farthest from downtown, in the areas between transit routes. Built Form Guidance: New and remodeled buildings in the Interior 1 district should be small-scale residential. Individual lots are permitted to have up to three dwelling units. Combining of lots is generally not permitted. Building heights should be 1 to 2.5 stories.

2) Interior 2 – The Interior 2 district is typically applied in parts of the city that developed during the era when streetcars were a primary mode of transportation, in the areas in between transit routes, and on select streets with intermittent local transit service. It is also applied adjacent to the Corridor 4 and Corridor 6 districts, serving as a transition to lower intensity residential areas. Built Form Guidance: New and remodeled buildings in the Interior 2 district should be small-scale residential. Individual lots are permitted to have up to three dwelling units. Multifamily buildings with more than three units are permitted on larger lots. Limited combining of lots is permitted. Building heights should be 1 to 2.5 stories.

Changing the boundaries of the Built Form designations would require a comprehensive plan amendment.

Adopted Form Overlay Districts.

Because the Minneapolis Plan created all new future land use categories, and introduced built form designations, it required a complete rewrite of the City's zoning code. A zoning code is a tool which implements a city's comprehensive plan and regulates the land use and built form of every parcel in the City. State statute requires cities to update their zoning to comply with their adopted comprehensive plans within 9 months of their adoption (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/473.865>).

In order to align the zoning code with Minneapolis 2040, it was necessary to break the code into two sections, one which would regulate land use and the other which would regulate the built form. The built form regulations were completed first and went into effect in January 2021. Because the underlying zoning districts were not updated yet to align with the future land use categories in Minneapolis 2040, the built form regulations were adopted as overlay districts that would apply over the top of the existing zoning districts. The Built Form Overlay Districts regulate the physical form of structures on a given parcel, such as height, floor area ratio, and setbacks. They also regulate the minimum lot area for certain types of development, as well as place limits on the combining of lots for each Overlay District. There are 14 Built Form Overlay Districts, which correspond to the 14 Built Form Designations in Minneapolis 2040:

1) An overview of the Built Form Overlay Districts and the adopted map can be found here: <https://minneapolis2040.com/implementation/built-form-regulations/>

2) The Built Form Overlay District Handbook, which includes all of the regulations can be found here: https://minneapolis2040.com/media/1818/ver3-cityofminneapolis_built-form-overlay-districts-handbook.pdf

The Interior 2 Built Form Overlay District (BF12) applies to properties with an Interior 2 Built Form guidance in Minneapolis 2040:

1) The full ordinance can be found here: https://library.municode.com/mn/minneapolis/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=MICOOR_TIT20ZOCO_CH552BUFOOVDI

2) A handout that summarizes the regulations for Interior 2 can be found here: https://minneapolis2040.com/media/1723/cityofminneapolis_built-form-overlay-districts-handbook_interior-2.pdf

Bottom Line: Given that Interior 2 future land use is clearly supposed to accommodate buildings with 4+ units on larger lots, adopting zoning regulations that don't allow 4+ unit buildings is not a reasonable outcome. That would leave us with an overt conflict between adopted policies and regulations.

Adopted Built Form Regulations:

1) Adopted Maximum Floor Area Ratio:

A) The maximum floor area ratio for 1-3 unit buildings in the BF12 Overlay District is 0.5;

B) The maximum Floor area ratio for 4+ unit buildings in the BF12 Overlay District is 0.8

2) Adopted Minimum and Maximum Lot Dimensions. Below are the lot dimension regulations that apply to buildings with 4+ dwelling units in the BF12 Overlay District:

A) Minimum lot width of 50 feet;

B) Minimum lot area of 7,500 square feet;

C) Maximum lot area of 14,000 square feet

3) Adopted Building Height. Below are all of the height regulations that apply to buildings in the BF12 Overlay District:

A) Dwellings with 1-3 units and cluster developments: i) 2.5 stories, 28 ft. and the highest point of a gable, hip, or gambrel roof shall not exceed 33 feet: Notwithstanding the height limitations of this chapter, the maximum height of single-, two-, and three-family dwellings may be increased to thirty-five (35) feet when the established height of a minimum of fifty (50) percent of the single-, two-, and three-family dwellings within one hundred (100) feet of the subject site exceed the maximum height. The highest point of a gable, hip, or gambrel roof shall not exceed forty (40) feet; ii) Additional exemptions allowed administratively: Rooftop features used exclusively for mechanical equipment, elevators, or stairways on single-, two-, or three-family dwellings, provided all of the following conditions are met: a) Such building features may extend up to ten (10) feet above the roof of the floor below; b) The combined coverage of such building features shall not occupy more than one hundred fifty (150) square feet of the roof area. c) Other height increases: by variance only.

B) Institutional and civic uses: i) 3 stories, 42 ft; ii) Exemptions allowed administratively: see below for all other uses: iii) Height increases: by variance only.

C) All other uses:

A) 2.5 stories, 35 ft.;

B) Exemptions allowed*: i) Communication antennas, wind energy conversion systems, and solar energy systems otherwise allowed by administrative review in Chapter 550, Development Standards; ii) Parapets not exceeding three (3) feet, except where located on single-, two-, or three-family dwellings or cluster developments; iii) Railings up to four (4) feet in height as measured from the roof, and not more than sixty (60) percent opaque; iv) Rooftop features used exclusively for mechanical equipment, elevators, or stairways, provided all of the following conditions are met: a) Such building features are not located on single-, two-, or three-family dwellings; b) The combined coverage of such building features shall not occupy more than thirty (30) percent of the roof area of the floor below; c) Such building features may extend up to sixteen (16) feet above the roof of the floor below; d) Where located within fifteen (15) feet of the wall of the floor below, such build-

ing features shall not exceed twenty (20) feet in width as measured parallel to the adjacent wall.

C) Other height increases: by variance only

*For a number of years, architects suggested that our height and area allowances for elevators was not sufficient. Many variances were triggered by the old standards before the ordinance was changed to allow more flexibility with mechanical equipment.

4) Adopted Shoreland Overlay Height . Below are the additional height regulations that apply to properties in the Shoreland Overlay:

The maximum height requirement of all structures is 2.5 stories, 35 feet, unless a more restrictive height requirement applies elsewhere in the zoning code, such as for dwellings with 1-3 units. Height exemptions referenced above (e.g., elevator overruns) do not apply in the SH overlay.

Bottom Line: The maximum height of a flat-roofed multifamily building in the Interior 2 Overlay District would be 2.5 stories and 35 feet with a three foot parapet. Parapets are used, in part, to screen mechanical equipment and would not be in addition to any mechanical equipment. Mechanical equipment may occupy up to 30 percent of the roof area up to a maximum height of 16 feet, and cannot be more than 20 feet in width if located within 15 feet from the edge of the building. On properties within the Shoreland Overlay, there are no height exemptions, so 35 feet would be the maximum height for a flat roofed building.

5) Editorial on height increases. Prior to Minneapolis 2040 and the adoption of the Built Form Overlay Districts, height increases were common on new development. The previous comprehensive plan and zoning were ambiguous about minimum and maximum heights, and variances were not required to increase height. While in the Shoreland Overlay District, height increases require a Conditional Use Permit, prior to Minneapolis 2040, they did not require a variance. Since the adoption of Minneapolis 2040 and the Built Form Overlay Districts, far fewer variances in general are being granted, and staff was not able to find an example of any height variances that have been granted for small scale residential development.

6) Proposed Zoning Code Amendments. The City is now in the process of drafting and adopting the second section of the Zoning Code, the Land Use Rezoning Study (LURS). This current rezoning study will create all new underlying zoning districts, which will regulate the uses within each district and apply them in alignment with the Future Land Use designations assigned to each parcel in Minneapolis 2040. Revisiting where built form districts are mapped is not part of the scope of the LURS project.

A project website, with proposed zoning map, land use table, and a full draft of the regulations can be found here: <https://minneapolis2040.com/implementation/land-use-rezoning-study/>.

The project is currently in the public comment period, which was extended an additional 30 days to March 26, 2023. After which, staff will revise the draft in response to the comments received. A public hearing for the Land Use Rezoning work is tentatively scheduled for the April 24 City Planning Commission meeting. Full consideration by the City Council is tentatively anticipated to take place on May 25, 2023.

The Land Use Rezoning draft proposes 17 new zoning districts, which correlate to and implement the 12 Future Land Use categories in Minneapolis 2040.

In order to effectively implement Minneapolis 2040 and address the range of uses which may reasonably be allowed on properties guided for a Future Land Use of Urban Neighborhood (UN), it was necessary to create three new zoning districts (UN1, UN2 and UN3), which would apply to various UN guided properties. The draft LURS proposes using the Built Form Overlay District boundaries as a way to determine which UN district should apply to a property:

A) UN1 zoning district – proposed to apply to properties with the adopted Interior 1 Built Form Overlay District;

B) UN2 zoning district – proposed to apply to properties with the adopted Interior 2 and Interior 3 Built Form Overlay Districts;

C) UN3 zoning district – proposed to apply to remaining properties with Urban Neighborhood future land use guidance and the adopted Corridor 3 or above Built Form Overlay Districts and allow more congregate living uses than UN2

7) A note on the survey question: The methodology of where to apply the UN3 district is open for debate. It is currently proposed to apply widely to all UN guided properties with a built form of Interior 3 or greater; however, this does not need to be the case. If, for example, community input was that there should be fewer places where congregate care uses should be allowed, then it may be appropriate to increase the application of UN2 to more areas that would otherwise be zoned UN3. This was the intent and nature of the first survey question, though admittedly it was initially worded poorly. Where to apply triplexes versus buildings with 4 or more units is a topic regulated by the Built Form guidance in Minneapolis 2040 and implemented by the Built Form Overlay Districts. Changing the boundaries of this would require a comprehensive plan amendment.

A) Because there are a relatively few uses allowed in the UN zoning districts, the proposed regulations in the LURS are also relatively few.

B) Summary of proposed UN2 requirements: i) In addition to uses allowed in the UN1 district, the UN2 district also allows dwellings with 4 or more units, single room occupancy housing, fraternity/sorority existing on the effective date of the ordinance, and off-site parking lots serving multiple-family residences and congregate living uses, ii) There are several use standards that refer specifically to the UN2 district, including for common lot developments and cluster developments which ensure the minimum lot dimension requirements of the Interior 2 built form overlay are not circumvented for developments with 4 or more units; iii) A full list of the proposed land use allowances for all proposed zoning districts can be found here: <https://minneapolis2040.com/media/1927/lurs-uses-allowed-table-draft-handout.pdf>

8) Proposed Shoreland Overlay Amendments. As part of the LURS there are some amendments being proposed to the Shoreland Overlay District, to clean up conflicts that exist between the Shoreland Overlay and the new zoning. One such amendment would set a minimum lot size for 4+ units at 10,000 square feet, as opposed to the 7,500 square foot minimum required in BF12 zoned properties outside of the Shoreland Overlay.

Meg McMahan, Planning Director, City of Minneapolis Community Planning and Economic Development Department.

OPINION

By Marty Carlson

“Built Form” Is Zoning: A Traveler’s Guide to the New Language of the 2040 Plan



A



Urban Neighborhood 2 (UN2) — Bryn Mawr, East Isles, Kenwood and Lowry Hill Neighborhoods (City of Minneapolis)

Last month’s front-page editorial reported on the plan of the city of Minneapolis to rezone most of Kenwood, Lowry Hill and East Isles as “Urban Neighborhood 2,” a designation that would allow the construction of fourplex and up multi-unit housing on many of the lots in these neighborhoods. As we all work to understand the changes this plan proposes to work in our area, it’s important to have a reasonably detailed working knowledge of what we’re dealing with: how did we get here, what are the key terms, and what comes next?

Zoning is complicated, but not impossible to understand.

To start with, it’s almost a truism that zoning is complicated. To my mind, that’s the message the city is trying to send with its online rezoning survey questions — it’s too complicated for ordinary mortals to understand, so please just give up and let the “experts” do their jobs. But while zoning is complicated, it’s not complicated in the same way as understanding genetics, particle physics or international tax accounting. And I guarantee that if any of you get hauled in on a future zoning violation, the city’s position is going to be that it’s all so simple even an infant can understand it. As with many things, the truth is probably somewhere in the middle. Still, these are important rules that govern how we live, we’re expected to abide by them, and it’s worth an effort to try to understand the basics.

“Built Form” matters.

The main concept to understand in this current rezoning push is “built form.” Every time I’ve mentioned this concept these past few weeks, I can see people’s eyes immediately glaze (even over the phone). Everyone’s heard of zoning, but that’s not the case with built form.

So what is “built form,” you ask?

It’s zoning by another name, but it also has a specific meaning. In a

nutshell, when the city talks about “built form,” it is talking about the scale of development. Built form is where the scale and size of a development is established (i.e., height, mass, setbacks, etc.). So, for example, in an area zoned for Urban Neighborhood 1, a triplex is a scale of development (or “built form”) that is allowed, whereas a fourplex is a “built form” that is not allowed. Built form does not include the building’s use. Once you adapt to the techno-speak, it’s not actually that complicated.

We’re moving from one zoning map to two.

Where it gets actually complicated is that the city currently has two sets of maps: (1) the old zoning map we’re all used to; and (2) a new built form “overlay district” map. The old zoning map is what’s being debated now. The built form map was quietly implemented in 2020, during the pandemic and the riots, and became effective in 2021.

What the city is pushing towards is still two sets of maps, but with different goals. The “built form” map (already in place) sets the scale of development allowed in a given area, i.e., what structure types (“built forms”) are allowed there. The proposed new primary zoning map will set the types of uses allowed in those structures, i.e., can you have a liquor store in a particular commercial structure, or a B&B in a particular residential structure?

To further complicate things, the two maps use different language to describe the same area. For example, the areas in Kenwood and Lowry Hill proposed as Urban Neighborhood 2, abbreviated UN2, on the new zoning map are also mostly zoned as Interior 2, or IN2, on the built form map. So, to fully describe this area in the language of the 2040 Plan, you would say that you live in a UN2/IN2 neighborhood. The UN2 designation sets the permitted use as primarily residential, while the IN2 designation permits the “built form”

of fourplexes and up on lots in excess of 7,500 square feet. Put even more compactly, the “UN2” is about use, and the “IN2” is about scale and density. Simple, right? OK, maybe not, but hopefully you’re starting to get the drift...we’ve all got problems!

The City’s Problem

The problem for the city is that the old zoning map is still in place, and it doesn’t align with the new built form map. Example: our local neighborhoods are mostly zoned as IN2 under the built form map, which allows fourplexes, but they are still mostly zoned lower than R3 under the old zoning map, and that doesn’t allow fourplexes. So, until the maps align, the status quo prevails — no fourplexes.

Only once the old zoning map is repealed and replaced with the new one (where the UN and IN boundaries largely align) will fourplexes become the law of the land around here. But please note: the city is apparently taking the position that fourplexes are already allowed by virtue of being in a “built form overlay district,” but I don’t see that the actual ordinance language supports this conclusion.

Our Neighborhoods’ Problem

The problem for the neighborhoods is sneakiness. Make no mistake — the built form map is zoning; it just doesn’t use the word. And way back in 2018-19, when most of the debate over the 2040 plan was taking place, the city snuck the current built form map into the 2040 Comprehensive Plan itself. What most of us remember from the early 2040 debate is that the city initially proposed fourplexes city-wide.

After a great hue and cry, we were told the fourplexes were reduced to triplexes (or Frey-plexes, as the joke went), and everyone pretty much went back to living their lives. But the fourplexes truly never went away for roughly half the city, namely that portion between 38th Street in the south and Lowry Avenue in the north. Put differently, we were quietly and significantly rezoned without most of us actually realizing it.

So now the fourplexes (and up) are baked into the 2040 Plan, which is why the city says it had no choice but to implement the built form map in 2020 (again, while we were all distracted by the pandemic and the murder of George Floyd by a city employee), and that’s why it now says it has no choice but to adopt the new zoning map to conform with the built form map, and too bad for us.

"After a great hue and cry, we were told the fourplexes were reduced to triplexes (or Frey-plexes, as the joke went), and everyone pretty much went back to living their lives. But the fourplexes truly never went away for roughly half the city..."

So what’s to be done?

Truly, I don’t know, but a conversation has started and ideas are circulating. What I do know is that you shouldn’t feel bad for not having understood this, or for missing it during the main 2040 debate. Between the substitution of triplexes for fourplexes in the public discussion, and the careful avoidance of the word “zoning” during the adoption of the “built form” rules, this was designed to slip under the radar.

Words matter: you say, “built form” and people’s eyes glaze, you say “zoning” and they perk right up. It calls to mind the famous quote from Jaws: “Martin, it’s all psychological. You yell barracuda, everyone says ‘huh, what?’ You yell shark, we’ve got a panic on our hands on the Fourth of July.” Here, everyone was very careful not to yell “zoning,” even though that’s what “built form” is.

So, the state of play is this: The old zoning map largely remains in effect, but the city’s position is that the new zoning map boundaries must be adopted as presented (and regardless of public comment) because it is effectively required by the built form map that’s baked into the 2040 Plan.

So, to change the zoning to remove the fourplexes, you need to amend the 2040 Plan itself, and that (so I’m told) requires nine votes on the City Council. But, on the flip side, there is an open public comment period through March 26, and now that we know what’s afoot, this is definitely the time to speak up and make your views known, whatever those views may be.

Marty Carlson lives in Kenwood.

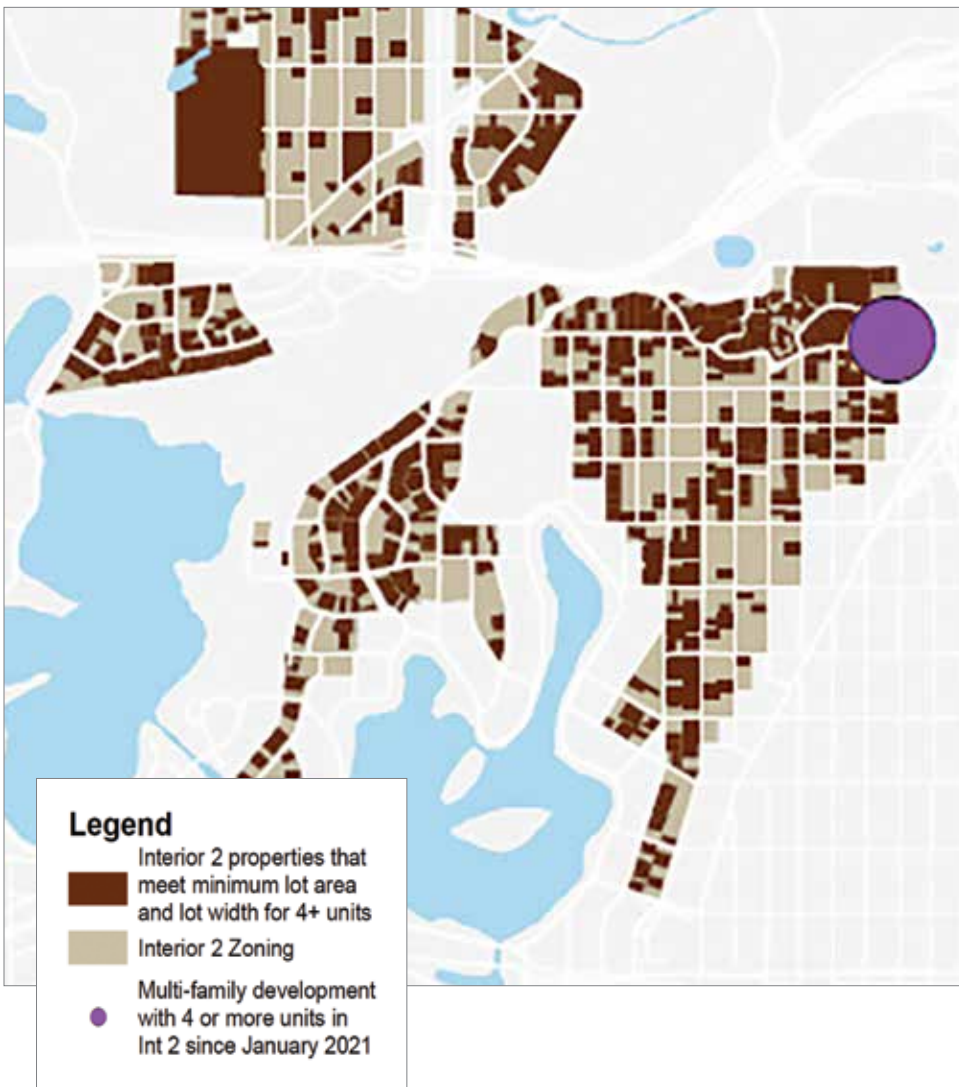


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A recent real estate listing for 1820 Girard Ave. S. in Lowry Hill claims that the property is “zoned up to nine units” in UN2. Previous zoning for the property was R2, or two units. Will the 2040 Plan incentivize developers to tear down historic buildings to rebuild multi-unit buildings? With nearly half the lots in East Isles, Kenwood and Lowry Hill over 7,500 square feet, many historic homes are potentially vulnerable. (Image Sotheby's International Realty)



This is a map of Interior 2 properties in Bryn Mawr, East Isles, Kenwood and Lowry Hill (Cedar-Isles-Dean is in Interior 1). The dark brown areas are properties with lots that are 7,500 or more square feet, permitting them to have four or more units. There are nearly 3,500 properties that meet a 7,500 square foot minimum lot area and 50 foot minimum width required for a development with four or more dwelling units. The purple dots represent a development that has taken advantage of the upzoning provided by the 2040 Plan since January 2021. The 2040 Plan was passed in January 2020. The determination that a “larger lot” would be 7,500 square feet or more occurred at a Planning Commission meeting in fall 2020, after the pandemic and social unrest of the summer of 2020. Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association, East Isles Neighborhood Association, Kenwood Neighborhood Organization and Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association were unaware of this determination of upzoning until last month. (Images City of Minneapolis)

AIM TO GUT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS, front page

but rather than crafting a defensible plan to actually do so, the city has spent countless taxpayer dollars trying to exempt itself from the essential environmental accountability that MERA provides — all without offering any substantive defense for the 2040 plan itself. That strategy having failed in court, we now see the Plan’s defenders sneakily attempting to quash the lawsuit legislatively.

But on top of allowing Minneapolis to avoid environmental consideration of their plan, it would open the door to any municipality avoiding environmental review of plans that would do far worse things than Minneapolis is trying to achieve. Imagine cities being given the green light to avoid environmental consideration of actions far more insidious than upzoning. This would open the door to things we probably cannot even imagine. Incinerators, landfills, mining, industrial activities, etc. exempted from citizen review if they are in zoning plans. We as a state do not want to go there.

2040 Plan Does Not Lead to More Affordable Housing

While the 2040 plan was enacted by a City Council concerned with the lack of affordable housing, it is having an opposite effect on our community. By upzoning most of the city but at the same time not providing any funding for or requirement of affordable housing, the plan has the perverse effect of removing the most affordable housing in the city and redeveloping it into market rate housing. Not only will we have a less environmentally sound community, but it will be less affordable than it is currently.

I hope you will join me in urging our legislators to reject HF2004/SF2159. The criticisms leveled against the 2040 Plan in our lawsuit are common sense, grounded in fact and supported by scientific analysis. If the suit remains on its successful path, Minneapolis will be better off: we’ll still have a 2040 plan, but one that balances the very real need for growth with actual environmental accountability. The lawsuit doesn’t entail a “no growth” strategy, but a smart growth strategy, which happens to be the name of one of the plaintiffs: Smart Growth Minneapolis. Please call or write your legislators today and urge them to oppose HF2004/SF2159.

Hill & Lake Press reached out to Rep. Frank Hornstein (61A) and Sen. Scott Dibble (61) at the time of publishing, but they were unavailable for comment. Please let State elected officials know how you feel about allowing the City of Minneapolis to evade longstanding environmental accountability and precedent.

David Hartwell is the founding President of the Minnesota Land Trust and has served as a board/council member of the National Audubon Society, Island Conservation, Belwin Conservancy, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, Legislative-Citi-

zen Commission on Minnesota Resources and many other not for profit organizations and business entities. He led a coalition of conservation groups that culminated in 2008 in the passage by the voters of Minnesota of a constitutional amendment that will raise an estimated \$7.5 billion dollars for conservation and the arts during its 25-year life. David lives in Lowry Hill.



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

- East Isles Neighborhood Association (EINA)
- Cedar-Isles-Dean Neighborhood Association (CIDNA)
- Kenwood Neighborhood Organization (KNO)
- Lowry Hill Neighborhood Association (LHNA)



OPINION

By Carol Becker

The Bike Lobby is Destroying Our Environment

The bicycle lobby is one of the most destructive environmental groups currently in Minneapolis. While bike riding may be environmentally sound, changes driven by the bike lobby to promote walking and biking have, or will, substantially increase carbon emissions, pollution and the energy cost to travel.

The Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition generated over 44,000 emails in support of the Hennepin Avenue Redesign. This plan would reduce the number of automobile lanes on Hennepin from two to one in each direction. Cars travelling on Hennepin in this single lane would be hopelessly snarled in congestion, creeping from one stoplight to another. Most people would avoid Hennepin and travel longer, less direct routes. Both would massively increase carbon emissions, pollution and energy costs.

The Bicycle Coalition generated over 24,000 emails to change I-94 between the downtowns from an interstate to a boulevard. (<https://www.twincitiesboulevard.org/>) They also generated over 25,000 emails to change Olson Memorial Highway into a boulevard. (<https://www.ourstreetsmpls.org/olson>) Both would massively increase car-

bon emissions, pollution, and energy costs by forcing automobiles into either stop-and-go congestion or taking much longer routes.

Similarly, the Bike Coalition got provisions in the city's 10-year Transportation Action Plan and its Street Design Standards to give priority to bikers and walkers over automobiles, changes that have driven up pollution by increasing traffic congestion, stop-and-go travel and idling. Traffic signals are prioritized for pedestrians and bikes, not for efficient automobile travel. Streets and bridges have been narrowed to accommodate bike lanes, creating auto backups. Barriers and distractions have been put in roadways, forcing drivers to slow down and speed up repeatedly. Walking and biking have been prioritized over automobiles at freeway entrances, creating backups at locations with large numbers of vehicles. All of these changes have dramatically increased carbon emissions and pollution.

There are two arguments for these changes. The first is that people will shift from driving in such great numbers that it will offset the increases in carbon emissions and pollution. But the promised offset isn't happening.

Transit ridership declined 25% in the six years prior to the pandemic and is down another 50% post-pandemic. Most bike lanes are as empty as when they were built. There are a few more electric bikes, but if you can twist your wrist and go 25 mph, that makes you a motorcycle. The result is that all of the changes are just increasing carbon emissions, not lowering them.

The second argument for these changes is to improve pedestrian safety. But, after millions of dollars of investments, pedestrian deaths in 2021 were the highest in 24 years. This isn't surprising. When you look at 26th and Lyndale, there were 28 pedestrian accidents reported to police: 23 of them happened after July 2022, when the city redesigned the road from four lanes to three and added a turn lane in the middle to "improve" pedestrian safety. It isn't the first time government action had unintended consequences.

We can't kill the climate to save the climate. The city of Minneapolis needs to consider the climate impact of every change they make. They should be doing a carbon emissions and pollution analysis with every project they do. There are ways to promote biking, walking and transit without creating more carbon emis-

"Transit ridership declined 25% in the six years prior to the pandemic and is down another 50% post-pandemic. Most bike lanes are as empty as when they were built. There are a few more electric bikes, but if you can twist your wrist and go 25 mph, that makes you a motorcycle."

sions and pollution in auto travel. And hopefully, when these studies come forward, both drivers and the bike lobby will support changes that actually reduce carbon emissions and pollution.

Dr. Carol Becker holds a Ph.D. in public administration, served on the Board of Estimate and Taxation for 16 years and is currently teaching government and political science at St. Catherine University in St. Paul.

TWO TALES OF A CITY, PART 1, front page

Street.

As the bus moved along R.T. pointed proudly to the murals on many buildings, reflecting the vibrant and resilient community around them. Some say that murals are a sign of urban renewal created in part to deter graffiti, a sign of urban decay, but that's something the muralists and taggers can debate! The tropical colors sure brightened the drab February street scape.

At Bloomington Avenue we passed Ingebretson's Nordic Market, a business built by Norwegian immigrants 102 years ago to meet the needs of the largely Scandinavian immigrants of that time, still owned by members of the Ingebretson family and in the same location. The walls are also covered with murals painted in traditional Scandinavian colors and designs, indicating that perhaps murals are about nothing more than the human desire to paint on bare walls! It was a great reminder of our city's immigrant past and the resiliency of the neighborhood. <https://www.ingebretsens.com/about/ourstore>

After passing a rebuilt Target store and a few more projects in the works the bus swung north to Franklin Avenue and headed back towards the Woman's Club. But we had one more stop. R.T. pointed out a nondescript one-story brick building and told the story of the son of an immigrant family from Czechoslovakia who owned a pharmacy there and how the mother carved out a small study area in the basement where the two kids would come home from school every day to do their homework. That family was his family,

and his mother ran the pharmacy after his father died of a heart attack at a young age. "Inside every small business you've seen today is the story of a family," he shared.

It is R.T.'s nature — and job — to be upbeat about the future of our city. And even those of us who are not cut from such cheerful cloth must make it our job to do more than carp about the problems. The bus tour highlighted the incredible efforts of those who are working hard on solutions and wasting no time on carping. But it also raised some questions.

Will the enormous outpouring of money and support to the businesses along that part of Lake Street be able to restore a vibrant and safe community or merely cover it over like a bright mural?

Is the renewal effort enough to combat serious crime in certain pockets such as the LRT station? What qualifies a business for assistance? The Lake Street Council's promotional video includes images of Uptown, but does any of the funding extend to Uptown? Will parking be removed from Lake Street as it was in the heart of Uptown to cut down on traffic and make the streets more people-friendly only to lead to business decline?

We'll take a look at recovery efforts in Uptown next month in Two Tales of a City, Part 2.

Susan Lenfestey is a co-founder of and present board member of the Hill & Lake Press. She resides in Lowry Hill.

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Southwest LRT Construction Update

By Jeanette Colby



(Image Met Council)

"A report on the SWLRT delays and cost overruns was expected to be completed by the Minnesota Office of Legislative Auditor on March 15. It has not been released as of this writing."

Southwest LRT cleared another "impediment" at the Kenilworth tunnel on March 2, and construction continues unabated on the rest of the corridor.

The Kenilworth Channel will be closed at least through spring,

and Cedar Lake Parkway will likely be closed through 2023 and into 2024. Announcements about these and other construction issues will be made through a weekly email; sign up at www.greenlineext.org.

Expect to see the road leading to Cedar Lake East Beach closed to vehicles this spring and summer. The intersection of 21st Street and Thomas Ave/22nd Street will undergo a big dig to install light rail tracks and for work on utilities. It's not clear at this time how any potential freight rail safety issue will be addressed during this construction.

Residents who live on Upton Ave. across from Cedar Lake Park will be able to drive to their homes on a temporary access road, which will presumably be wide enough for emergency vehicles. Pedestrians will also use a temporary path to get to the beach, woods and trails. According to David Davies of the

Southwest LRT Project Office, a community meeting is being planned for mid-March to discuss this upcoming work. The Kenwood Neighborhood Organization will share details through emails and social media.

Near the entrance to Cedar Lake Park on Upton Ave., two structures will be built: a freight crossing house measuring six by eight feet, and a much larger platform crossing house measuring 10 by 30 feet. These sheds will contain the controls for crossing gates and other necessary station area equipment. There are currently no plans for murals or public art to make these structures more compatible with their surroundings.

As construction moves forward on the beleaguered SWLRT, the Met Council may soon be rewarded with a new income stream. The Governor's office has proposed a new

metro-wide sales tax of 1/8-cent, plus a 3/8-cent increase on motor vehicle sales — regressive taxes that would provide the Met Council approximately \$60- to \$90 million annually ("Walz tucks tax, fee increases among checks and credits in his proposed budget," StarTribune, Jan. 25). The project is currently about four years behind schedule and at least \$700 million over budget with an unfunded gap of roughly \$260 million.

A report on the SWLRT delays and cost overruns was expected to be completed by the Minnesota Office of Legislative Auditor on March 15. It has not been released as of this writing.

Jeanette Colby lives in Kenwood.



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Birds at the Suet Feeder (Photos by Angie Erdrich)

OPINION

By Constance Pepin

Blame the Process Not the People

"A productive reflection on engagement would step back and consider the planning staff's own limited diversity and rigid adherence to a tightly-scripted top-down process that funnels input to ensure that the final plan will maximize funding opportunities for park development, and too often at the expense of our natural resources."

It's one thing for the Park Board to acknowledge inherent challenges that complicate their efforts to engage diverse populations; it's quite another to blame people who do engage for the Park Board's own failure to surmount those challenges.

That's exactly what happened in the draft Cedar-Isles Plan, as called out in a letter to Commissioners published in this issue of the Hill & Lake Press.

Following 14 pages in chapter 3 that exhaustively document Planning staff's hard work to recruit and involve "broader audiences" in the planning process, the Reflection on Engagement (section 3.9) declares staff's failure by taking aim at "deeply invested" residents from adjacent communities who had the fortitude to stay engaged for the duration.

These engaged citizens are criticized for sharing input numerous times through several engagement avenues and accused of having the loudest voices, with a jab toward members of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) for failing to represent all voices in the region.

It's hard to imagine a more divisive and unproductive reflection on lack of engagement than section 3.9. According to staff, neighboring residents who strongly engaged made it difficult to adequately incorporate and support ideas from underrepresented voices.

In fact, people who participated and demonstrated civility and clarity throughout the process are not to blame for an engagement process that did not hear more voices or produce staff's desired results.

A productive reflection on engagement would step back and consider the planning staff's own limited diversity and rigid adherence to a tightly-scripted top-down process that funnels input to ensure that the final plan will maximize funding opportunities for park development, and too often at the expense of our natural resources.

Flaws in this process are already known to discourage participation by underrepresented communities, not just in this case but in other projects. Two years ago, for example, comments on the draft Parks for All Comprehensive Plan called out the CAC meeting structure and decision-making process as rooted in white supremacy and not preferred or effective across the diverse range of Park Board stakeholders. Significant changes to the Park Board's community engagement structures were recommended but did not happen.

The Metropolitan Council's Regional Park Equity Analysis requires that master plans include a summary of the public engagement process, advice heard, and how the advice shaped the master plan. The list of stakeholders to consider includes youth, Black, Indigenous and people of color communities, people with disabilities, low-income populations, people age 60 and over, and neighborhood/regional groups that participated as planning staff, CAC members, outreach liaisons and the general public. It's unfortunate that section 3.9 focuses on blaming some of those stakeholders for the lack of participation by others, rather than on elevating the two major themes that numerous stakeholder groups consistently emphasized throughout the entire planning process: first and foremost, protect our natural resources and take care of what we have before building more amenities. Any reflection on community engagement is incomplete without highlighting these unifying themes that transcend stakeholder divisions and were the biggest and most important ideas to emerge from the planning process.

Constance Pepin was a Cedar-Isles plan CAC member and lives in Linden Hills.



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OPINION

by Steve Kotvis

Cedar-Isles Plan à la Carte Menu Fails Nature and People

"Wildness conjures a vision of an untouched, perhaps pure urban wilderness, right? Wrong. In reality, it reflects decades of the Park Board's institutional neglect."

The Park Board's draft of the final Cedar-Isles Plan delivers on its stated purpose. The problem is that *purpose* in this context is more about pleasing people than improving our parks. It's painful to raise this core concern at this late hour of the lengthy planning process. But there's a proposed amendment before the commissioners that can largely resolve this dilemma.

The plan's purpose is "...to sensitively respond to the general engagement..." The root intention is to create a plan that responds to what people want. By design, the planning process and the draft plan is anthropocentric. Centered on human wants and desires, the draft plan offers an à la carte menu of tactical site designs that will leave what gets done and when, to political will and funding support.

The thorn in the side is that local residents consistently pleaded throughout the planning process for a long-term plan based on what's good for the environment. In other words, ecocentric, not anthropocentric. The Cedar-Isles area is no different than most of our other metropolitan area's regional parks. Gifted with an abundance of natural resources, humans are but one of the many members of the ecological community. We exist holistically, connected physically, emotionally and spiritually. The draft plan literally sets this guidance in chapter 2.2 Indigenous Legacy, "In the beginning, the water — Mni — was pure, part of the land, and therefore part of the people. It was the first medicine given to our people because water keeps everything alive. Water that comes from within the earth is pure and as such is considered wakan or sacred."

But as written, the draft plan fails to explicitly translate this guidance into a nature-first focused strategic plan. While the planning process was extensive, collecting perspectives from existing and potential park users far and wide, the draft plan fails to equivalently assess nature's needs. Explicitly recognizing the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and especially threats, would go a long way toward evaluating existing and anticipated human demands and interests within an ecological context. A long-term visionary plan centered on how humans want to use the area's natural resources without significant regard for nature is selfish, exploitative and ecologically unsustainable.

We live in an urban park system during a time of climate change and

declining biodiversity. Harmony is possible when holding onto the thought that humans are a part of nature and nature is a part of being human. Repeatedly throughout the planning process, local residents voiced concerns on behalf of the water, trees, birds, critters, insects and microorganisms that tell us each day about their needs for survival. Given the planning processes' shallow level of primary ecological research and analysis, it's not too much to ask that this public input be seriously valued.

But regrettably, the draft plan marginalizes those who spoke up as "loud" and instructed the Citizens Advisory Committee to try to not be too swayed by "highly engaged" local residents. It also marginalizes the physical evidence nature is displaying. It barely translates what's included in the existing conditions about the natural area into concerns to be addressed in the principles or implementation sections. The draft plan even goes so far as to spin the message about the natural woodlands and prairie surrounding Cedar Lake that are literally suffering a not so slow and steady death of suffocation and poison from buckthorn and invasives. The draft plan calls it "wildness." Wildness conjures a vision of an untouched, perhaps pure urban wilderness, right? Wrong. In reality, it reflects decades of the Park Board's institutional neglect. This draft plan fails to identify invasives as an immediate threat to natural areas, and perpetuates the idea that the Park Board will continue to relegate the role of ecological restoration to park stewards and volunteers. After all, we know who they are. They're the "loud" ones.

Now is a time to speak up one more time. Speak on behalf of nature and our whole ecosystem. Support a proposed amendment to the draft plan that places nature first. And add a comment that we need to fix what we've got before building new stuff.

Steve Kotvis lives in Bryn Mawr.

"We live in an urban park system during a time of climate change and declining biodiversity. Harmony is possible when holding onto the thought that humans are a part of nature and nature is a part of being human."



(Photo Tim Sheridan)

Meet Your Neighbor

By Susan Lenfestey

Sino & Sarah Hantous, Sibling Proprietors of Rinata Restaurant on Hennepin Avenue



Sino and Sarah Hantous
(Photo Anonymous)

Rinata is in a modest building on Hennepin at 25th. Don't be fooled by the plain jane façade, bathed in the glow of the Holiday Station across the street. Inside is an unpretentious bar and restaurant serving delicious Italian food, and a very good martini, too.

It's also refreshingly free of televisions or over-amped music, so conversations are possible. And it's an easy walking distance for many of us in the Hill & Lake area, which comes in handy if there's a martini involved.

Amor Hantous and his business partner, Jon Hunt, took over the former Giorgio's in 2008. Amor suffered a stroke in 2018 and since then Sino and Sarah, two of his three children, have stepped up to run the business.

First, let me get your names right! And where did you grow up?

Sino: My full name is Yassine. Sino is a nickname our older brother gave me.

Sarah: My name is Sarah. I'm the youngest sibling and a server here at Rinata. We both grew up in South Minneapolis and went to South High School.

Sino: I later graduated from University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and have been working at Rinata

full time since then. I'm the bartender and manager.

Tell us a bit about the history of Rinata. And what does Rinata mean?

Sino: Rinata opened in late summer 2008 here at 25th and Hennepin. Our dad opened the restaurant with his former business partner Jon Hunt, who owned and operated Al Vento in the Nokomis neighborhood. Dad is still the co-owner of Rinata with his business partner Scott Butters.

Sarah:

Rinata means reborn in Italian and is an ode to Giorgio's which was in the space before us. Our dad tells us it was an iconic place in the Minneapolis restaurant scene, being one of the first authentic Italian restaurants in Minneapolis.

Your father was born in Tunisia. How did he wind up in Minnesota?

Sino: Yes, our dad was born and raised in Tunisia. He was the only boy of his six siblings. He moved to New York when he was 17 and met my mom there before moving to her home state of Minnesota. She was a NICU nurse at Children's Minneapolis for 35 years.

You must have been quite young in the early days of Rinata. Do you have memories of coming to the restaurant as kids?

Sarah: We always wanted to be around the restaurant when we were younger and loved waiting up late for my dad to get home with a pizza after closing up.

Am I right that you took over running the restaurant after your father's stroke? How old were you at the time? Does your dad still advise you or has he stepped back?

Sino: Sarah and I have both been helping out at Rinata since we were 15-16. I'm 27 this month and Sarah just turned 24. We started out bus-

seating guests.

Sarah: Or running whatever errands Dad needs done.

Sino: Our dad still runs the restaurant day-to-day but isn't out on the floor as much these days. He had a stroke in 2018 and that impacted his being at the restaurant all the time like he used to. He definitely still quarterbacks the whole place.

Sarah: Something that will always be memorable to me is the number of people who ask about our dad, just checking in on him, asking how he's doing and where he's been (the majority of the time not even knowing that the person they're asking is his daughter!). It's cool and a good feeling to see how many people care for him.

Tell us about the learning curve. What surprised you?

Sarah: This has been my one and only restaurant job. The biggest surprise to me was how much more really goes into working at a restaurant than the eyes might see. There are a lot of little details that you have to pay attention to that can really make or break a night for you.

You managed to get through Covid, both personally and as a business. What was that like?

Sino: I think the toughest part of Covid was that it's nothing this world has ever seen. No one knew what this was going to look like. And it felt that same way with the restaurant. Just waiting and wanting to reopen. When we finally were able to operate with takeout the amount of support we got from the community and neighborhood was overwhelming. I truly believe we have the best regulars in the city, and they are responsible for keeping us open through such a tough time.

Sarah: It seems like a lot of businesses in Uptown have been affected in the last couple of years with what's going on, us included. We're just grateful to still be here and be open for the neighborhood and everyone else.

What are some of your favorites or the most popular things on the menu? Were most dishes developed by your dad?

Sino: Rinata has always been a "scratch kitchen," making pasta, bread, sauces, dressings and everything in between from scratch and then developing seasonal recipes with what is available. My favorite staple is the bucatini all' amatriciana and of course the Caesar salad.

Sarah: I love the pizza we make here. Fennel sausage especially and whatever seasonal one we might have.

How are you preparing for the two-year construction period on Hennepin Avenue? How can the neighborhood help small family businesses like yours get through it?

Sino: Anytime there is construction that inhibits customers from getting to and from your business that's a big challenge. We are definitely thinking about what it might look like and how we can continue business as usual. Moving around in the city can be a challenge so we are very thankful to our customer base and hope more people continue to come see us here at Rinata.

Sarah: The neighborhood already does an amazing job at supporting us, from coming in for dinner, recommending us to friends and family, ordering takeout and many more little things that keeps us going. With that continued support I think we will have a chance to make it through as a small business.

Rinata is located at 2451 Hennepin Ave S. For more information, visit www.rinatarestaurant.com.

Susan Lenfestey is a co-founder of and present board member of the Hill & Lake Press. She resides in Lowry Hill.



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Kenwood School: Distinctive Student Experiences, New Funding for Future Growth

By Karin Olson

Sledding for gym class! Drumming with Brother Ghana! Creating with local Native American artists! Visiting the Ordway to see the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra! February All-School Read-A-Thon!

Joyful learning, unique experiences and the magic of youth are alive and well for the 400 students at our vibrant community school. With its wonderfully diverse student body (18 different languages are spoken among Kenwood students!), unique programming and an engaged community of staff, parents and caregivers, Kenwood is a very special place to learn and grow. And with its recent designation as a Title 1 school, resources to support success for every student will be even more robust next year.

Having met the threshold to receive significant school-wide federal funding increases, leaders at Kenwood have surveyed staff and student families to learn what

they think the priorities should be for expanding staff and enhancing programming next year. Plans are being finalized now.

Said school principal Heidi Johnson, “We are thrilled to engage in a collaborative process to ensure that additional funding and new staff roles truly benefit all students, from those striving to work at grade level to advanced learners seeking extra challenges. It’s our privilege to support all students in thriving academically, socially and emotionally. It’s an exciting time to be a part of this community.”

Johnson and her team will share final plans with the community in the coming weeks.

For more information about the programs at Kenwood School, visit www.kenwood.mps.k12.mn.us and www.kenwood-pta.org

Karin Olson in a Kenwood School parent and volunteer. She lives in Kenwood

The mosaic tree welcomes students to school each day. It was created in 2008 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Kenwood School’s building. Created by local artist and Kenwood parent Stacia Goodman, along with students, the tree uses school supplies as a reminder to reuse items and reduce waste. (Photo Karin Olson)

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PHOTO FEATURE

Laudable Luminary Loppet Laurels

By Susan Lenfestey

Congratulations and gratitude to the volunteers of the Luminary Loppet who managed to pull off our city's most magical winter evening despite every curveball this fluky winter threw at them, from a heavy blanket of snow that kept Lake of the Isles from freezing solid and forced a two-week postponement to a drenching rain four days before the rescheduled date that melted many prepared lanterns and left the lake ice slick and dangerous. With typical Luminarian spirit and resourcefulness, they moved what they could onto the western shore, relocated the bandstand and beer garden to the soccer field, and 15,000 hardy Minnesotans were once again blown away by the beauty of fire and ice and community.



Icecropolis (Photo by Henry LaBounta)



Castle by Ice Wrangler, mushrooms by Ice Wrangler and Jeremy Gould (Photo by Jana Freiband)



Luminary lantern, luminary hall, shiny ice and downtown (Photo by Henry LaBounta)



Ice by Jeremy Gould (Photo by Jeremy Gould)



Luminary penguins (Photo by Henry LaBounta)



Warming up in the beer garden, Luminary Hall (Photo by Henry LaBounta)



Ice by Wintercraft Team (Photo by Wavescribe)



Lanterns by Luminarians (Photo by Jana Freiband)



Ice by Wintercraft Team (Photo by Wavescribe)



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entertainment featuring musician Lori Dokken, jazz vocalist Connie Evingson, & five-time Grammy Award nominee Karrin Allyson


East Isles residents,

Half of our Board seats open in April. Our mission is to foster connections among East Isles neighbors and businesses, embracing renters and owners alike, of all interests, ages and experiences.

Submit your nomination by Sunday, April 2, and we'll share out your candidacy and platform issues!

Voices from the renter and business communities are needed at the table. Nominations close at the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, April 11, then online voting opens.

Visit eastisles.org/join to nominate, register for the Annual Meeting, and engage in other ways:

- 1 Take our survey to help identify priorities in the neighborhood, and share your ideas.
- 2 Join a Committee to address East Isles green issues, public safety, transit, outreach and more.
- 3 Donate to support neighborhood events, resources and opportunities. 



eastisles.org/join  

UPCOMING EVENTS

East Isles Safety Walking Club

Mar. 23 Thursday, 5:30 – 7 PM
Apr. 2 Sunday, 10 – 11:30 AM
Apr. 26 Wednesday, 5:30 – 7 PM

Meet at Triangle Park · 26th St. & Irving Ave. S.

Get outside, meet neighbors and help make our community safer! Bring flashlights as needed.

East Isles 2023 Annual Meeting

Apr. 11 Tuesday, 6:30 – 9 PM

This is our opportunity to gather as neighbors, hear from elected officials and select leaders for the coming years. Register to vote at eastisles.org/meeting/

East Isles Earth Day Cleanup

Apr. 22 Saturday, 9:30 AM – 12 PM

Meet on Lake of the Isles footpath, near W. 28th St. stairs

Bags and gloves will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Light refreshments will also be provided. Bring your neighbors, kids and friends!

Dates subject to change—visit eastisles.org for the latest.



LOWRY HILL NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

March 2023



Thank you for your generous support.



Would you like to be more involved with the neighborhood?

Consider running for a seat on the LHNA Board. Visit lowryhillneighborhood.org and apply before 5/1/23. Elections will be held at the Annual Meeting in May.



Interested in the next LHNA Board meeting?

The next LHNA Board meeting will be held Tuesday, April 4th at 7:00 pm at the Kenwood Community Center (2101 W Franklin Ave) - our first in person meeting in three years. The agenda is available on our website.

Sign up for the LHNA email newsletter at lowryhillneighborhood.org

Dear Neighbor

A monthly column by Dorothy Richmond



Let's talk about driving. I hate it and have spent much of my adult life actively avoiding it.

It began as a lack of enthusiasm. I was nowhere among my peers clamoring for the license they regarded as freedom. Freedom is a relative term and I've never once found it in a car.

I finally got around to taking my driving test when I was twenty, and failed. The next time I failed, too. The next time — OK, there's a word limit to these columns, so I'll cut to the chase: I failed the driving test six times. And, while disappointed, sad truth? I really didn't care. I suspect the root cause was, and remains, my complete lack of a sense of direction. Even now, with Siri as my co-pilot, I usually have no idea where I am.

In the 1980s I moved to St. Louis for graduate school. As I lived within walking distance of the university, driving wasn't an issue. But, still, I had to get around for errands and socializing. The bus, while it allowed me to read, required planning and was hardly destination specific, so I

got a pair of roller skates. I had a job a few miles from home base and skated to and fro professionally and socially. It was great exercise and afforded me enormous flexibility. One day, en route to work, I was pulled over by a policeman on Clayton Road for "reckless rolling" (his words, not mine). I was trying out tricks. After that I confined my practice sessions (delightful to me!) to Forest Park, the St. Louis equivalent to Central Park in New York.

But fall, and then winter, came. St. Louis doesn't get much snow, and, with my Minnesota blood, it never seemed all that cold. Still, it got dark just as it does here, and skating at night is scary. So, I got a moped because it had a headlight and, in those days, didn't require a license to operate.

My moped cost \$200.00, purchased from somebody who'd advertised in the classifieds. It was fire-engine red, had a one-gallon gas tank that seemed to last forever. What I loved most was its name emblazoned across the fuel tank: Swinger. The smaller print revealed that it came from J.C. Penney. Along with my skates, I was officially a two-vehicle family of one. Ritzy, I know.

But then tragedy struck. First, my beloved Swinger was stolen, and next, the teaching job at a school a mile from my apartment I'd really wanted, and got, had the audacity to move eight miles away — freeway included. This was too much for roller skates or my replacement moped. I had to get a car. But first I had to get a license. I was twenty-six.

My downstairs neighbor, Diane, who seemed high whether she was on drugs or not, agreed to give me driving lessons. There's nothing like

desperation to kick up the learning curve. After a few weeks' tutorial with stoned Diane, I took the driving test in her smoky car. When my barrel-chested examiner told me I'd passed, I reached over to hug him. Flinching, he said, "Don't touch me."

So, a car at last: A 1978 Dodge Dart (again from somebody who'd advertised in the classifieds). It was the color of a russet potato — handy, as it camouflaged the rust. I liked that car. It had neither power steering nor power breaks, no bells and no whistles, only an AM radio, which worked fine. I drove it for six years until it died. By then I was living and working in St. Paul and hanging out with fellow professionals. One evening at a party a woman, who'd just gotten a BMW, a "Bimmer," was hectoring me about my "clunky car." When I'd had enough of her overt nastiness, I met her at her game and asked if her Bimmer was paid for.

Since then, I've had a string of cars, none of which made me like driving. Driving requires one to focus outward, and I'm not good at that. I much prefer focusing inward, thinking about things, as opposed to looking at them.

I'm fortunate to work at home where my commute is a flight of stairs. My current car, purchased new in 2010, recently turned over 50,000 miles, many of them attributed to my daughters.

Roz Chast, The New Yorker cartoonist, and fellow vehophobe, summed it up perfectly: Driving is either stressful (I'm lost) or boring (I'm not lost). Sometimes you just can't win.

— Dorothy

Dorothy Richmond is an experienced Spanish instructor and the author of several Spanish textbooks. She is a longtime resident of Cedar-Isles-Dean.

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PHOTO FEATURE

Photos by Tim Sheridan

Polar Plunge at Cedar Lake



Morgan Jensen and Madeline Carter submerged in Cedar Lake. (Photo Tim Sheridan)



Luke Nolby and Jenny Weber taking a plunge in Cedar Lake. (Photo Tim Sheridan)

CORRECTION: Last month we incorrectly identified the Polar Plunge photo location as Lake Harriet. The photo was taken at Cedar Lake (Photo Tim Sheridan)

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