

# Community REPORTER

SERVING WEST END NEIGHBORHOODS, DOWNTOWN ST. PAUL TO FORT SNELLING, SINCE 1970



PIZZA MAYA  
page 5

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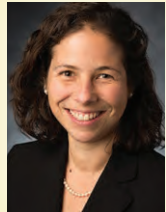
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## COUNCIL PERSPECTIVES Hard Work Beyond the Headlines



REBECCA NOECKER  
CITY COUNCIL  
PRESIDENT,  
MEMBER, WARD 2  
columnist

Ramsey County's recent announcement of a \$320 million commitment to downtown is good news. We need all our partners on board to rejuvenate our urban core with more housing, shopping, jobs and public amenities. The economic boost this investment could provide will expand our

city and regional tax base, alleviating the tax burden on residents and businesses.

The funding will help jumpstart development at RiversEdge, the site of the former West Publishing Building and Ramsey County jail that has sat vacant for the last decade. It will also support new housing development and public infrastructure downtown, like sidewalks, lights and trees.

There's hard work ahead to make sure this announcement is more than just a hopeful headline. Here are some ways the County can ensure the dollars do the most good for downtown and the entire region:

**Move with urgency.** Too many County projects have been announced to great fanfare and then stalled out. An ambitious plan for RiversEdge was unveiled in 2018 and has since stagnated. The County's Riverview Corridor project, undertaken three decades ago, was dropped unceremoniously last fall with no backup plan. When the City organized trash collection in 2018, the County's curbside composting program was "just around the corner". Eight years later, it still is. Downtown doesn't have years to wait. We need this development today.

**Make good on the "private" part of the public-private development.** RiversEdge is being billed as a "public-private partnership", but the only private partner, AECOM, walked away from the project last year and there's been no mention of how a new partner will be engaged or what the private development will look like. In order to maximize the public investment, private development must be part of the deal. The County should double down on the search for a new partner and make sure their work on the public park in the meantime doesn't make it harder to find a developer for the private components.

**Involve the community.** The County's announcement prompted a number of my constituents to reach out with good questions. What will be the ongoing operational cost of the park? Are housing and jobs still part of the deal? What will be the impact on the tax base? Given that the dollars are coming from existing funding sources, why did it take so long for the County to make this commitment to downtown - and what is the opportunity cost of spending money here rather than on other pressing needs?

The County's "Building Stronger Together" website notes that this initiative builds on previous plans that included public input, but an investment of this kind warrants its own community engagement process, especially if the County is rethinking the private development components. Community engagement doesn't have to slow things down; in fact, authentic public involvement should occur within a relatively short timeframe to keep people engaged and to actually inform the work. It's an essential part of the process.

**Work with partners.** The County's announcement aligns with the work that we at the City have been doing for years to

HARD WORK, PG 6

## Ramsey County Pitches \$320 Million 'Building Stronger Together' Plan To Reshape Downtown St. Paul

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

**R**amsey County officials are advancing an ambitious \$320 million economic development strategy aimed at revitalizing downtown St. Paul and strengthening the county's long-term fiscal outlook, though key questions remain about funding and timing.

The initiative, dubbed "Building Stronger Together," was formally introduced April 14 as a coordinated effort to reinvest in the county's urban core while preparing publicly owned land for future private development. Leaders say the plan is both a response to pandemic-era economic shifts and a proactive strategy to address structural budget pressures.

"Building Stronger Together is a \$320 million investment that reflects our commitment to economic resilience, housing access and long term fiscal health," said Board Chair Rafael Ortega.

**Downtown revival at the center**  
A central focus of the plan is downtown St. Paul, which county officials describe as critical to regional economic health but still struggling with reduced office occupancy, declining property values and lower foot traffic.

Community and Economic Development Director Josh Olson said the strategy is designed to "stimulate both private and public investment, with the goal of creating a more vibrant and dynamic and active downtown."

Approximately \$250 million of the proposed investment is directed toward downtown initiatives. These include infrastructure upgrades,



Ramsey County Board Chair Rafael Ortega, with Ramsey County Manager Ling Becker and State Rep. María Isa Pérez-Vega, discuss the proposed Building Stronger Together plan at a press conference on April 14, 2026.

housing development, business activation programs and improvements to public spaces designed to make the area more attractive to residents and visitors.

Among the most prominent proposals is the long-envisioned River's Edge redevelopment site along the Mississippi River. Plans call for transforming the area into a mixed-use district with new housing, commercial activity and expanded park space, reconnecting downtown to the riverfront.

"For us, that's the public realm," Ortega said. "The crucial piece for us is to build a park that goes down to the river."

The county's push aligns with recent action by the city of St. Paul, which approved a \$5 million

downtown investment package on March 27. Mayor Kaohly Her emphasized the importance of coordination across governments.

"This moment reflects something important: alignment," Her said. "City, county and state leaders are not just working alongside each other. We are working with each other toward a shared vision for downtown."

She said the investment is about bringing more activity into the city's core, adding, "The investment we are talking about today will help bring more people, more energy and more opportunity into the heart of our city."

County leaders say these investments are intended to catalyze private development and increase the number of people living downtown—a shift seen as essential to stabilizing the tax base and supporting local businesses.

Together, the city and county initiatives reflect a growing consensus that downtown St. Paul must evolve beyond its traditional office-based economy.

**Expanding the tax base through land development**

While downtown is the centerpiece, the initiative also targets long-term growth across Ramsey County through redevelopment of publicly owned land.

Olson said Ramsey County is uniquely positioned to drive growth as a major landowner.

"The county owns currently hundreds of acres of vacant, underutilized land across the county that is truly ripe for redevelopment and ready for redevelopment," he said.

About \$70 million is allocated to prepare

STRONGER TOGETHER, PG 2

## Introducing Building Stronger Together



RAMSEY COUNTY  
COMMISSIONER,  
DISTRICT 5  
RAFAEL ORTEGA

Last month, I shared what Ramsey County's fiscal health analysis tells us: how we use land—and the kind of development we support—has a direct impact on our ability to fund essential services and manage property tax pressures.

This month, I want to share what we are doing about it. As a Ramsey County Commissioner, I hear clearly from residents: costs are rising, and property taxes feel like a growing burden. That concern is real—and it is exactly why

we are advancing Building Stronger Together, a \$320 million forward-looking economic development strategy designed to strengthen our tax base, grow opportunity and reduce long-term pressure on taxpayers.

At its core, Building Stronger Together focuses on two connected strategies.

First, we are investing \$250 million into dedicated to downtown-focused investments, including major capital projects, infrastructure improvements, housing initiatives and business development efforts.

These investments will support:  
• Large-scale public infrastructure and placemaking projects like the Park at RiversEdge

INTRODUCTION, PG 6

## New Members Elected to West 7th/Fort Road Federation Board

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

At its April 13 annual meeting at Summit Brewing Company, the West 7th/Fort Road Federation elected a mix of new and returning board members, adding fresh voices while maintaining continuity in key leadership roles.

Newly elected to the board are Nathan Zacharias as second vice president, Suzi Wint as an Area 1 coordinator, Alicia Larson representing Area 3 and Matt Saumweber as an at-large coordinator. Each will serve alongside existing members in guiding the district council's work on neighborhood priorities.

Voters also returned several incumbents to their roles. Meg Duhr was re-elected as president, continuing her leadership of the organization, while Sara Fleetham will remain secretary. In



the geographic coordinator roles, Korinne Dennis was re-elected in Area 1 and Kelsey Peterson will continue representing Area 2.

The Federation's board is composed of volunteers who represent residents either by geographic area or in at-large positions. Area coordinators serve as a key link between neighbors and the board, bringing forward concerns related to zoning, development, safety and other quality-of-life issues across the West 7th district.

The annual election reflects the Federation's ongoing effort to balance institutional knowledge with new perspectives. In recent years, the board has remained focused on strengthening community engagement, navigating development pressures and supporting neighborhood-led initiatives.

In addition to board elections, the Federation announced a new staff hire aimed at expanding

that outreach work. Jenna Bowman will join the organization this summer as a part-time Community Engagement Coordinator. In the role, she will support neighborhood outreach, assist with community garden efforts and help organize events such as the West End Garage Sale and Garden Tour.

Federation leaders said the added staff capacity will help deepen connections across the neighborhood, particularly during the busy summer months when community events are in full swing.

With its updated board and new staff support, the Federation is preparing for another active year of organizing and advocacy. Board meetings remain open to the public, and residents are encouraged to connect with their area coordinators to share concerns and stay involved in shaping the future of West 7th.

Learn more at [fortroadfed.org](http://fortroadfed.org).



## COMMUNITY VOICES

## BUILDING COMMUNITY

## Proud in St. Paul

TIM JOHNSON  
columnist

We are from St. Paul, Minnesota.

That was part of the brief introduction my wife and I gave as we met a new group of people with whom we would be traveling. It was on the heels of ICE significantly diminishing its

presence in our state. I

have always had a certain measure of pride in being from Minnesota, but like many, I feel it now more than ever. As we got to know other group members and they inquired about the experience of living through what they had only read about, several group members literally thanked us for what we had done with resisting ICE. In many respects, it felt like what I imagine it is like for veterans when they hear

someone thank them for their service. We, of course, knew our part was small and less consequential than others. All the same, we felt pride in our state, our city, our neighborhoods.

In many respects, spring is a season for the unleashing of pride. Parents are filled with pride as the child they have encouraged and supported walks across the stage to receive their diploma or parents simply take a measure of their child's maturing as they dress for a prom. Family and friends are filled with joy and pride as a young couple stands facing each other, committing themselves to a lifetime of love. It is a time of year when awards are given, achievements acknowledged and in all these things, pride is like a bouquet filling the room with its gentle and fragrant presence.

As a virtue, pride is essential. It reminds us of our self-worth, our dignity. It can come from the things we do and accomplish or it can come from our identity, our belonging to a particular group or place. We are proud of our community, its many historic and new restaurants, thriving coffee shops, breweries, independent businesses, parks or annual

events like the Art Crawl. Black pride, gay pride or any identity pride often came into being because people have been told that their particular identity makes them lesser and therefore not deserving of pride. To claim pride is to claim your worth. Pride is strongest, however, when it comes from the awareness we have great value and worth just by being, requiring no achievement or affiliation, but simply our existence is sufficient to feel pride. In religious terms, this is what is meant to be created in the image of God. Every human being is entitled to this pride.

Unfortunately, pride is not only recognized as a needed virtue, it can also become a destructive vice. It is considered a foundational stone on which other destructive vices are built like greed, vanity or envy. Proverbs in the Hebrew Scriptures warns, "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Pride as a vice is the polar opposite of humility. White supremacists have pride in their identity, but it demands the diminishment of other identities. Rather than graciously receive praise, destructive pride demands adulation,

including such things as having one's name affixed in places of prominence. Pride as a vice seeks to fill a void, a hole that no amount of praise or adulation can ever fill because it is disconnected from an internal awareness of value and worth.

Pride can be either a virtue enhancing life or a vice diminishing life. Recently a friend of ours showed us her new tattoo. It was the Minnesota resistance loon sitting proudly and strongly on cubes of ice. When ICE was terrorizing children and their parents, she was part of a group of teachers who helped organize meals for families, bringing food to their homes. The loon symbolized the pride she felt in being part of a group that showed compassion and caring for those in need. Hers was a pride that enhanced life.

Communities are strongest; our state is strongest, when our shared pride is based precisely on the way we work together in building spaces and places where all are welcome and everyone can thrive, where each one can discover the pride of knowing their own value and worth.

## NOTEBOOK RECOLLECTIONS

In Memoriam:  
Dr. Dana BrianTIM RUMSEY  
columnist

Dr. Dana Brian M.D. loved W. 7th. The neighborhood, the history, the community spirit. But mostly she loved her W. 7th patients. Babies, kids, teens and young adults. Moms and Pops.

She was especially close to folks on the "down and out" at the

St. Paul Homeless Clinic in downtown St. Paul. And also her elder Russian immigrant patients at the St. Paul Jewish Community Center.

Dr. Brian worked at Ramsey Hospital (later Regions) prior to joining United Family Medicine. She ended her career with over 30 years at UFM.

Dr. Dana died February 10, 2026 at age 78, due to late effects of post-polio. Her Minneapolis *Star Tribune* obituary noted that she "passed peacefully at home."

She was born in Okmulgee, Oklahoma and was a member of the Musagee Creek Nation.

Dana had a Native Spirit and world view. She was a child of the earth. She was wise and a "wise-acre." She could bring a laugh to the lousiest day. It was a privilege for we UFM folks to work with Dana for 35 years.

Her memorial service in late March was a reunion of friends and family, and Clinic colleagues. Old and New Testament readings were complimented by a beautiful Muscogee wisdom reading, "The Spirits' Journey," personal tributes and a perfect Dr. Brian song, "A Change is Gonna Come."

Dana loved her patients' stories and told great stories herself. She was down to earth and open-minded. She traveled with her patients on their suffering journeys.

We will miss Dana and her great sense of humor and exceptional compassion.

Dr. Dana Brian loved W. 7th. West 7th loved Dana Brian.



Dr. Dana Brian

## STRONGER TOGETHER, PG 1

and market county-owned properties for development. This includes infrastructure investments—such as roads, utilities and site preparation—intended to make parcels more attractive to private developers.

County officials noted that Ramsey County is fully developed, with limited opportunities for large-scale new construction. As a result, converting underutilized land into productive uses is seen as one of the few viable paths to expanding the tax base.

Projects like Rice Creek Commons, a major redevelopment site on the former Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant, are expected to benefit from this approach.

Officials argue that bringing more land onto the tax rolls will help offset financial pressures driven by rising service costs and a significant share of tax-exempt property. Roughly 14% of property in the county does not generate property tax revenue, according to county data.

## Financial pressures driving urgency

County leaders framed the initiative as a response to mounting financial pressures, including rising service costs, limited land availability and a heavy reliance on property taxes.

County Manager Ling Becker said those pressures are unsustainable without expanding the tax base.

"We're facing real and compounding challenges—a downtown still rebuilding momentum, a constrained tax base, rising service demands," Becker said. "And all of this puts added pressure on our property taxpayers. And that is unsustainable."

"Reducing this property burden is our number one priority at the County," she added.

County leaders point to increasing demand for services, including public health and human services, alongside rising costs that have increasingly shifted from federal and state governments to local jurisdictions.

At the same time, the value of commercial office space—traditionally a major contributor to property tax revenue—has declined in many downtowns, including St. Paul.

Without intervention, officials warn, these trends could lead to continued pressure on residential property taxes.

"At the end of the day, we cannot tax our community to a point that they cannot live here," Becker said.

No levy increase—but questions remain. Despite unanimous support from county commissioners, the plan faces a number of hurdles.

Officials said the \$320 million plan will not require an increase in the county's property tax levy. Instead, it relies on existing resources, bonding and anticipated external funding.

"This strategy does not increase the property tax levy," Olson said. "Instead, it comes from dedicated resources and through



A rendering of the proposed RiversEdge project that would connect downtown to the Mississippi.

strategic bonding."

However, several major components depend on funding that is not yet secured.

The county is seeking state bonding dollars, including about \$20 million tied to River's Edge. While lawmakers expressed support, approval is not guaranteed in a divided Legislature.

State Rep. María Isa Pérez-Vega said she is continuing to push for funding.

"We're going to keep fighting for it," Pérez-Vega said. "I'm confident that we're going to get something through the finish line."

That uncertainty could affect both the scope and timing of key projects.

Still, Ortega made clear that the broader initiative is not entirely dependent on state funding.

"Even if the request for \$20 million at the legislature doesn't happen this year, it does not stop us from moving forward," he said.

In addition, some aspects of the River's Edge redevelopment require agreements with railroad companies that control adjacent land and infrastructure. County officials acknowledged that negotiations are ongoing and that no final agreements are in place.

County officials said discussions are ongoing but acknowledged that progress will take time.

One of the most significant unanswered questions is timing.

Officials did not provide a clear timeline for when major projects—particularly River's Edge—would begin or be completed.

Ortega acknowledged the uncertainty when asked about construction timing.

"Standing still, the answer is, it'll never be done," he said. "We're going to move forward."

Becker said the decision to launch the plan now reflects urgency rather than waiting for all details to be finalized.

"At some point, we have to have this moment," she said. "We are not satisfied with

a downtown and a community that's going to be stagnant."

While some elements—such as planning work and community engagement—are already underway, officials did not provide specific dates for when major construction projects would begin or be completed.

Instead, leaders described the initiative as a flexible, multi-year strategy that will evolve as funding becomes available and partnerships are secured.

The county plans to host additional workshops and stakeholder meetings in the coming months to refine project details and gather public input.

Still, the lack of a defined timeline raises questions about how quickly residents and businesses might see tangible results.

## A catalyst for broader change

Despite the uncertainties, county leaders repeatedly framed the initiative as a necessary step to reverse economic stagnation and position St. Paul for long-term growth.

"This is the moment to act," Ortega said. "We're being a catalyst again. That's the crucial role, to have enough resources to really make things move forward."

Mayor Her echoed that sentiment, tying the effort to broader regional success.

"A strong downtown St. Paul is essential to a strong region," she said.

For Ramsey County, the strategy represents both a significant financial commitment and a calculated risk—one that hinges on partnerships, market conditions and political support.

And for downtown St. Paul, the coming years will determine whether "Building Stronger Together" can translate vision into reality—or whether funding gaps and logistical challenges will slow its momentum.

As Becker put it, "No one is coming to solve these challenges for us. This is our moment."

Community  
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## COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

### Neighborhood Clean-up Day

BY KORINNE DENNIS

Spring has sprung... kind of. In Minnesota, do we ever really know when the season officially begins? For me, the annual neighborhood clean-up is the true signal of a fresh start.

There's something special about watching the neighborhood come back to life, especially after we've cleared away the trash and recyclables scattered across sidewalks and green spaces. It's a small act with a big impact, and it wouldn't be possible without neighbors who show up ready to roll up their sleeves. After a morning of hard work, we gathered to enjoy coffee and pastries from Wildflyer, a well-earned reward and a chance to connect.

Jenna Cruz and her partner made the drive from White Bear Lake to Little Bohemia. "I love volunteering," Jenna shared, proudly wearing her Southern New Hampshire University T-shirt—the same school I'm currently attending for my master's degree. "I was so excited to see there was an opportunity to volunteer so close to home." Jenna shared that she also volunteers with the American

Red Cross and Math on the Stick at the State Fair. She is currently pursuing a degree in Business Administration with a focus on Business Analytics.

Our clean-up day was already on the calendar when I received an email from Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU), which is celebrating its Global Days of Service from March through the end of April. With a strong emphasis on community engagement, it felt like a natural fit to connect SNHU, the Fort Road Federation and Little Bohemia in a shared celebration of Earth Day. For both on-campus and online students like me, initiatives like this offer a meaningful way to connect with others who share our values and are committed to keeping our community spaces clean. They sent us reusable totes, which you can never have too many of, but I'm sure will continue to forget in my trunk on my next trip to Aldi or Trader Joe's.

Thank you to our neighbors and friends who helped make it a success. Remember, you can organize a clean-up any time of the year, and I would love to help you promote it. Hope to see you at the next one!



Volunteers helping to clean up Little Bohemia Trail on April 25.

#### CITY OPENS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET FOR COMMUNITY INPUT

Residents have an opportunity to help shape future infrastructure investments as the city opens its 2026 Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) community poll.

The poll, open through May 4, allows residents to review and vote on proposed projects ranging from park improvements to street safety upgrades. Community-submitted proposals this year include projects such as playground upgrades at Dousman Park in West 7th, pedestrian lighting improvements downtown, and trail connections near Ayd Mill Road.

City officials say the process is a key way for residents to influence how public funds are allocated for long-term investments. The CIB covers projects with a lifespan of at least 10 years, including roads, bridges, parks and public facilities.

Following the poll, a public hearing is scheduled for June 8, with final recommendations going to the mayor by the end of June. The City Council is expected to adopt the final budget in December. The process is part of a broader effort to increase transparency and equity in how infrastructure dollars are spent across St. Paul neighborhoods.

More information and voting: [stpaul.abalancingact.com/2026CIB](http://stpaul.abalancingact.com/2026CIB)

#### WEST 7TH MURAL GRANT PROGRAM OPENS APPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

Artists and business owners in the West 7th neighborhood can apply for up to \$10,000 in funding to create new public murals as part of a corridor beautification effort.

The West 7th/Fort Road Federation is accepting applications through May 10 for projects located on or within a tenth of a mile of West 7th Street. The grants support design and installation costs, including artist fees and materials.

The program builds on previous initiatives like the West 7th VIBE grants and aims to enhance the neighborhood's identity through public art while supporting local creatives.

Murals must be completed by July 12, and selected projects will be evaluated based on artistic merit, feasibility and community impact. The federation will pay artists directly, reducing upfront costs for applicants.

Applications and details: contact the West 7th/Fort Road Federation or visit [fortroadfed.org/call-for-murals](http://fortroadfed.org/call-for-murals).

#### SOLAR INSTALLATION AT FIRE STATION #3 TO CUT ENERGY USE, COSTS

A newly installed solar energy system at Fire Station #3 is expected to significantly reduce energy use and operating costs, city officials announced.

The project was supported by a \$72,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Commerce's Solar on Public Buildings Program and includes a 40-kilowatt rooftop system.

Fire Station #3, located in the West 7th St. area, recently underwent a full renovation before reopening in December 2025. The facility had previously been closed as an active fire station for about 15 years and was later used for EMS training and as a day shelter during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The updated station now supports expanded fire and emergency medical services in the neighborhood.

#### COURT RULING DELAYS VICTORIA PARK ACCESSIBLE PLAYGROUND PROJECT

Plans for a new universally accessible playground at Victoria Park in the West 7th neighborhood have been delayed following a ruling by the Minnesota Court of Appeals that raises questions about how the city can use voter-approved sales tax funds.

City officials announced the postponement of a March groundbreaking event as they evaluate next steps. The project, which would be the first fully accessible playground of its kind in St. Paul, is intended to serve children of all abilities with inclusive play equipment and design features.

City leaders say the delay is disappointing but emphasize their commitment to moving forward. The project is particularly significant for families in West 7th and surrounding neighborhoods who have advocated for more inclusive recreation options.

Victoria Park, once an industrial site, has undergone extensive redevelopment and is a key green space along the Mississippi River corridor. More information: [stpaul.gov/victoriaparkproject](http://stpaul.gov/victoriaparkproject)

#### HOURCAR OPENS NEW ELECTRIC CARSHARE HUB IN WEST 7TH ST. NEIGHBORHOOD

HOURCAR has expanded access to flexible transportation options for residents and nearby communities.

The new Evie Loop hub is located at the Little Mod apartments at 796 Stewart Ave. Users can reserve electric vehicles by the hour or for trips lasting up to three

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**COMMUNITYREPORTER.ORG/CATEGORY/NEIGHBORHOOD-NEWS**

days. Membership includes charging, insurance and maintenance costs.

HOURCAR also operates the Evie Free-Float service, which allows members to locate and reserve vehicles for one-way trips through a mobile app.

The West 7th St. hub is part of HOURCAR's Multifamily Electric Vehicle Carshare Pilot Project, supported by Xcel Energy. The initiative focuses on expanding electric vehicle access at multifamily housing sites, particularly in communities that have historically faced barriers to transportation options and EV infrastructure.

In 2025, HOURCAR added nine all-electric hubs at multifamily properties across the Twin Cities, with additional locations planned this year. More information and membership details are available at [hourcar.org](http://hourcar.org).

#### WEST 7TH "SHOP SMALL" ADVENTURE

The West 7th/Fort Road Federation is starting its first "Discover West 7th: Shop Small Adventure" this summer. This will bring more people to the shops along the West

7th corridor. The program runs from June 1 to July 31, and customers are encouraged to visit stores and restaurants that are taking part by getting stamps on a "passport" card.

Shoppers who visit and collect at least 10 stamps will be entered into drawings for \$25 gift cards from participating businesses. People who visit every location will be eligible for a grand prize package that includes gift cards from all 10 locations. Businesses are required to contribute two \$25 gift cards and provide customers who buy something a stamp or sticker.

Organizers say the program is designed to highlight small businesses and create a destination experience along West 7th, an area that has been the focus of ongoing revitalization efforts over the past few years. This effort fits in with bigger plans for the neighborhood to help local businesses and make the district's economy stronger. Businesses that want to take part must be in the West 7th/Fort Road area and must sign up by May 26. Find out more and register at <https://bit.ly/discoverw7th>

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[www.sokolmn.org](http://www.sokolmn.org)

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## COMMUNITY HISTORY

### ORIGIN STORIES

# Part The Twelfth: Robert Sweeny Sketches Early St. Paul

BY JOE LANDSBERGER

Robert Ormsby Sweeny (1830-1902) arrived in St. Paul in 1852 as near the first documented Quaker to the territory. His mother Rachel Ormsby (1797-1841) was from a prominent Philadelphia Quaker family. His father, Frederick was an Irish immigrant who died in 1845 during the Mexican War. As a youth Robert supported himself as a clerk in a hotel and wholesale silk house as well as pharmacy where he learned the profession.

The Philadelphia College of Pharmacy was founded in 1821 as America's First College of Pharmacy. It was established by 68 Philadelphia apothecaries; many were members of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). While not an official "Quaker school" by church affiliation, every president of the college between 1821 and 1900 was a Quaker.

In 1852 Sweeny arrived in St. Paul and worked with W. S. Potts, a pioneer druggist. Sweeny opened his own apothecary shop on Third Street (now Kellogg Boulevard) at Bridge Square at St. Paul's first bridge. He spoke both Dakota and Ojibwe and described himself as "Proprietor and Manufacturer [sic] of Sweeny's Wild Cherry Cough Syrup, Cholera Mixture, Stewart's Cough Syrup, Corn and Wart Cure, Dysmenorrhoea Drops, Neuralgiafuge, Toothache Drops, Indelible Ink, Pink of Pink Tooth Powder."

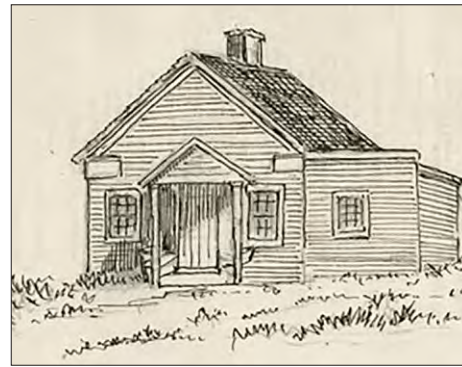
He was also a prominent Mason of remarkable artistic talents. The 1856-57 city directory listed him as a "designer," and the 1857 census as an "artist." In 1858 the legislature approved his design of the Minnesota state seal, but it was rejected by Governor Henry Sibley since it portrayed harmony between Native Americans and settlers.

Sweeny co-drafted legislation for standards for pharmacists and co-founded the Minnesota Pharmaceutical Association. In 1870 he was part of a group of citizens who founded the St. Paul Academy of Natural Sciences, a forerunner of the Science Museum of Minnesota. He served as president of the Minnesota Historical Society in 1875-1876.

He was deeply interested in the propagation of fish and was appointed the first fish commissioner of the state. In the 1880s he established the first fish hatchery at the



Robert Ormsby Sweeny, 1870.



Vital Guerin's (early settler who contributed land for St. Paul's first chapel house) at Seventh and Wabasha Streets.

mouth of the Lester River in Duluth for Lake Superior's commercial fishery. As its superintendent, the family relocated to Duluth in 1889 until Sweeny's death in 1902. He was buried in Oakland Cemetery in St. Paul.

The fishery closed in 1946 and was sold to the University of Minnesota Duluth as its Limnological (fresh water) Research Station. Its surviving four Stick and Shingle Style buildings were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

More legacy: Sweeny chronicled/sketched early pioneer life in Minnesota! The Minnesota Historical Society has over 400 of his historic images of early St. Paul. They included early log homes, commercial buildings, geological sites, fur traders and Natives, and plants. He also is credited with Minnesota's moniker as the "gopher state" from an unsuccessful political cartoon. During the Civil War, 1861-62, he accompanied his brother-in-law, Dr. Stewart to Missouri and Arkansas, as an unpaid hospital steward/pharmacist where he continued to sketch. Recovering from an eye injury, he traveled to Mankato for the execution of 38 Dakota from the uprising. His portraits of ten were created the morning of the hanging December 26, 1862.

Quaker women of Minnesota: Anna Earl Jenks married (governor) Alexander Ramsey in 1844. She brought a large amount of money to the marriage, which Ramsey invested in real estate in Minnesota. Robert Sweeny married Helen Benezet in 1864. Benezets were prominent Quakers, abolitionists and philanthropists in Philadelphia. Robert's sisters Mary Sweeny married William L. Banning (banker,



Robert Ormsby Sweeny in costume for the 1886 Saint Paul Winter Carnival.



Dakota Hypolite Auge. One of ten sketched the morning of his execution with 37 others December 26, 1862 by Robert Sweeny, Mankato.

Banning State Park) in 1850 in Philadelphia, and Catherine Sweeny married Dr. Jacob H. Stewart (doctor, mayor, postmaster, state senator, state surgeon general, US congressman, and state surveyor) in 1857 in St. Paul.

You can find a copy of "The Origin Story of Fort Road/West Seventh Street, the Township/City of Saint Paul, the Territory/State of Minnesota: Glacial Age Forward" at your local library, or order up a copy of your own at [fortroadfed.org](http://fortroadfed.org). Learn more about the book and find Joe's upcoming conversations about the history of West 7th at [josfland.com](http://josfland.com).

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# EMERALD LOUNGE



455 West 7th Street | [emeraldstpaul.com](http://emeraldstpaul.com)

**COMMUNITY BUSINESS**

**Pizza Maya Blends Chicago Style Pies With Nepalese Flare**

BY DAMIAN GOEBEL

A new restaurant blending tavern-style pizza with Nepali flavors has opened on West 7th St., bringing a fresh concept to the neighborhood.

Pizza Maya opened April 20 in a brand new building where a former produce warehouse stood at 1324 West 7th, offering a menu that pairs Chicago-style tavern pizza with momo dumplings, sandwiches and a full bar. The restaurant is owned by Naveen Shrestha, whose portfolio includes Himalayan Restaurant and Highland Cafe & Bakery.

Manager PJ Cadotte said the concept reflects Shrestha's long track record of adapting to customer demand—something that dates back to the early days of Highland Cafe.

"We put a couple curries and some dumplings, the momos, on the menu," Cadotte said. "That became such a success that people wanted more and more Nepalese food."

That demand eventually led Shrestha to open a dedicated Nepali restaurant in Minneapolis. Pizza Maya, Cadotte said, represents a new step—bringing that same spirit of experimentation into a more casual, neighborhood-friendly format.

"This is our fusion," he said. "He's done other concepts, but he's never done a pizza place."

The menu reflects that mix. Alongside thin, square-cut tavern pizzas are steamed or fried momo dumplings filled with options like chicken, vegetables or Italian sausage. Sandwiches include a chicken parmesan and an Italian beef served on ciabatta, while appetizers lean toward bar fare such as wings and pickle fries.

Early customer favorites highlight the restaurant's hybrid approach.

"The prosciutto was our number one selling pizza," Cadotte said. "And the momo comes in second, followed by pepperoni."



Manager PJ Cadotte and owner Naveen Shrestha opened Pizza Maya at 1324 West 7th on April 20.

The prosciutto pie, finished with hot honey, has quickly become a standout, while the momo pizza incorporates the same seasoned filling used in the dumplings.

Beyond the food, Pizza Maya is designed as a social space. The restaurant features a full bar along with its multiple seating options and big-screen tvs. Cadotte said the pairing of pizza and drinks was intentional. "It seemed like a good concept for a new bar—beer, pizza," he said.

The space itself offers distinct experiences, from a darker, bar-focused interior to a bright, year-round patio room with skylights and floral decor. "Completely different rooms," Cadotte said, noting the patio is designed for all seasons.

Looking ahead, the restaurant is preparing to open an adjacent event space and host a grand opening celebration later in May. Plans

for the event include live entertainment, a cultural dance troupe and giveaways, with early attendees receiving free food items. The event space, which is nearing completion, will be available for private rentals ranging from meetings to wedding receptions and can accommodate outside catering.

Pizza Maya is also leaning into early promotions. For Cinco de Mayo, the restaurant plans to offer a taco pizza special along with \$5 house margaritas.

With off-street parking, daily hours from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and a menu that bridges cultures, Pizza Maya is positioning itself as both a neighborhood staple and a destination.

"We've had no complaints," Cadotte said.

**IF YOU GO**  
Pizza Maya, 1324 7th St W. St. Paul, MN  
Open 11 a.m. - 9 p.m. daily. @pizzamayamn

**HIGHLAND PARK COMMUNITY SPOTLIGHT**

**Sibley Manor providing quality, affordable housing in the neighborhood**

Each month, we are featuring a Highland Park business or organization. Community Spotlight honorees may have deep roots in Highland Park or might be new to the neighborhood. Visit [highlanddistrictcouncil.org/community-spotlight](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/community-spotlight) to see more spotlights and to have your business or organization featured.

This month, we are featuring Sibley Manor. For over 70 years, they have provided quality, affordable housing in the neighborhood.

From Katherine (Kathy) Bell, Asset Manager at Sibley Manor for the past 18 years

**Please describe your business/efforts in Highland Park.**

For 74 years and counting, we have offered clean, safe and affordable housing. We are not funded by the government, but have an ownership that has always strived to keep the rents as low as possible. Personally, I am blessed to work directly for a family whose focus isn't just on making a profit, but to truly care for others. Our community has changed so much in the last 74 years; we have housed soldiers, pilots & flight attendants, Minnesota Twins, many local professionals and have welcomed families from all over the world. The last part is my personal favorite part; so many cultures and beautiful people have passed through our community. It truly is a small world after all!

**When did you first start your business/efforts in Highland Park?**

Sibley was completed in 1952 and purchased by the current owners in 1956. I encourage

everyone to visit our website at [www.sibleymanor.com](http://www.sibleymanor.com) to watch the video produced by Peter Myers. You can learn all about us as your neighbor!

**What was the inspiration for doing the work you do?**

From the beginning, and now continuing to the 4th generation, the ownership had a mission to provide stable housing for families. And the ownership has always taken it to the next level of providing it well, by offering more than just the bare minimum. It has been humbling to be charged with continuing this mission. There are so many people dependent on us to provide this service to the best of our ability. It is a great responsibility that we do not take lightly. Not everybody can afford a \$1,300 1-bedroom apartment! Those that cannot deserve the same right to clean and safe housing, as well as a community to belong to. We work hard to provide that, as well as gladly expending resources searching for assistance when needs arise from time to time. We never want anyone to feel alone or ashamed in their struggles, because we all have them.

**What's your favorite thing about Highland Park?**

The community as a whole, the District Council and the great places to grab lunch. (I think Cecil's has been here longer than we have!) I personally have been involved with the District Council for the majority of the last 18 years. It is a great way to be involved in our neighborhood

and allows us an opportunity to have the voice of our community down here, heard up there. It has been a pleasure meeting many residents and business owners over the years and to work together with a common goal of keeping Highland Park a wonderful neighborhood to live and work in. One thing I learned early on is that Highland Park is a passionate community!

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More events coming soon!  
MEET OUR BOARD AND STAFF  
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More info **CommunityReporter.org** or check out our socials

IN THE COMMUNITY

WESTEND HEALTHLINE

Advocacy for Healthcare

By Madison A. Snyder, MD

On March 4, nearly 100 Minnesota family physicians gathered at the state capitol to meet with legislators to discuss urgent issues impacting healthcare across our state. The event was organized by the Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, an organization dedicated to supporting family doctors as they care for patients of all ages throughout Minnesota.

One of the main focuses was access to healthcare. Medicare and Medicaid, which covers many Minnesotans including pregnant people, children, low-income families and those with disabilities, is at risk with proposed legislation. The legislation proposes stricter eligibility criteria, more frequent renewal requirements, work requirements for recipients, and changes to immigrant eligibility. The Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians opposes these changes because of the risks they pose to patient care.

If the legislation passes, it is predicted that many Minnesotans will lose insurance coverage or experience gaps in care due to increased paperwork and administrative barriers. When coverage is interrupted, patients are not able to see their doctor who knows their medical conditions best. When routine visits are missed, serious medical conditions are unrecognized, patients run out of medications, and preventable complications happen more often. The

consequences of this can be serious including missed prenatal care, increased emergency room visits and hospitalization, and even increased disability or preventable deaths. Low-income communities and rural areas are particularly at risk with the proposed changes. When preventative care and maintenance of health conditions is lost, healthcare spending tends to rise instead of fall due to the above complications.

The proposed funding changes also threaten the stability of local medical systems such as Hennepin County Medical Center (HCMC). This major hospital system in our community has a specialized burn unit and is a level I trauma center. It also cares for uninsured individuals and those who face significant barriers to accessing care including some of Minnesota's most vulnerable populations. Due to funding changes, this hospital system is at risk of closing. This would heavily impact both the patients who use this hospital system, but also other systems as the patients will be diverted to other facilities, some of which may not have the capabilities that HCMC has. HCMC is also a major educator of future physicians, including many who practice in Minnesota after training.

Minnesota struggles to maintain an appropriate number of physicians in rural and underserved communities. Proposed legislation would also reduce the amount of student loans that are available to medical students as

well as reducing student loan reimbursement that is available for doctors who work in these underserved areas. The reimbursement strategy is critical to recruiting physicians for these areas. This funding can be the difference for some individuals in whether they can pursue medicine or not. For example, the author of this article is a first-generation physician who grew up in a rural, low-income family. Without student loans or loan forgiveness programs, she could have not become a doctor.

There are meaningful ways you can advocate for healthcare access. If you're eligible, voting can be the most powerful. State and national elections determine which legislators support policies that expand or restrict healthcare coverage. Information about upcoming elections can be found through the Minnesota Secretary of State's website.

You can also contact your elected officials directly. The Minnesota Legislature website (leg.mn.gov) has tools to identify and communicate with the legislators who represent your district. Emails, letters, phone calls, and in-person meetings are all effective ways to share your perspective on this issue.

Finally, word of mouth is also powerful. Discussing the issues with friends, neighbors, and family members can encourage them to vote or meet with legislators. Healthcare access affects everyone, and protecting it should be a priority for all.

Dr. Snyder is a family physician at Allina Health United Family Physicians, 233 Grand Ave, St. Paul, MN 55102, 651-241-5200.



FEDERATION UPDATE



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Sat, May 9, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. 265 Oneida Street Join us at the West 7th Community Garden for a spring cleanup day!
- Sunday, May 10, 1-4 p.m. Little Bohemia Trail (Duke & Banfil). Help plant trees and native plants along the trail.

WEST END GARAGE SALE

May 30-31, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Explore the West 7th neighborhood during our second annual West End Garage Sale—a weekend of community spirit, great finds, and sustainable living! With dozens of households participating across the neighborhood, it's the perfect chance to hunt for bargains, discover hidden treasures, and support a circular economy by giving new life to pre-loved items. Sign up to host a sale - deadline May 15.

16TH ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR

Join the 2026 West End Neighbors' Garden Tour on Saturday, June 20, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. We're inviting gardeners in the West End to open their yards and share the beauty, creativity, and diversity of their spaces with neighbors and visitors. Tours are self-guided, so participants will walk or drive to each garden at their own pace. We welcome all types of gardens—ornamental, native, vegetable, pollinator-friendly, flower-filled, whimsical, or classic. More info at fortroadfed.org

UPCOMING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

- Transportation & Land Use, May 6, 6:30 p.m.
- Board Meeting, May 11, 7 p.m.
- Engagement & Fundraising, May 26, 6:30 p.m.

STAY IN TOUCH

"Like" us on Facebook. Subscribe to e-newsletter. More information at fortroadfederation.org

CONTACT

Julia McColley, julia@fortroadfederation.org; 651-298-5599; 395 Superior Street, St. Paul

LIBRARY UPDATE

So Much to Do This Spring at the Library

Your library card is more than an all-access pass to books and media—it can unlock an adventure through the outdoors or an evening of art and music. St. Paul Public Library offers a variety of services and programs for all ages whether you're looking for a relaxing night in or a fun-filled day out.

smARTpass is an arts access program open exclusively to Twin Cities metro area public library patrons. Use your library card to reserve free or discounted admission to a wide range of arts experiences—including events at places like the Children's Theatre Company, the CAT Museum, Turf Club, First Avenue, and more!

Looking to take an adventure outdoors?



Check out a free seven-day Minnesota State Parks pass at eight library locations to visit any

of the 64 state parks, nine recreation areas, or nine waysides for free. Whether you're craving a hike, a relaxing picnic, or even some camping under the stars, your library card can be your ticket to outdoor fun.

Use your library card to its fullest and get your free tickets to Twin Cities arts experiences or a free state park pass, or stop by at any of our free, fun activities at West 7th Library.

Events at West 7th Library

Find more events at [spl.org/events](http://spl.org/events).  
 Playdate @ West 7th - Tuesdays, 3-5 p.m.  
 Family Storytime - Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m.  
 ECFE - Monday, May 11, 2-3 p.m.

INTRODUCTION, PG 1

- A housing fund to help finance office-to-residential conversions, helping address both vacancies and housing supply
  - Improvements to transit corridors, streetscapes and public spaces to increase accessibility and activity
  - Business activation funding to attract and support new and expanding businesses
- These are upfront, long-term capital investments—the kind that require significant initial funding but are designed to generate ongoing property tax revenue growth over time. As the fiscal health analysis showed, dense, mixed-use development generates significantly more tax value per acre. A strong downtown is

not just a local benefit—it is a countywide asset that helps grow our overall tax base.

Second, we are unlocking the potential of more than 630 acres of county-owned land. This includes about \$70 million to prepare sites for redevelopment, covering critical upfront costs like infrastructure, environmental cleanup, and planning. These investments make it possible to turn underutilized land into housing, jobs, and long-term economic activity.

We know residents are already feeling the strain. That is why this plan focuses on long-term solutions. The Building Stronger Together strategy does not additionally increase the property tax levy. Instead, it uses existing dedicated resources and strategic bonding to

make targeted, high-impact investments that are expected to pay off through expanded tax base and economic growth.

At a time when we are being asked to do more with limited resources, we cannot afford to stand still. Building Stronger Together is how we turn opportunity into action—strengthening our economy and building a more resilient future for all.

Learn more at: [RamseyCountyMn.gov/BuildingStrongerTogether](http://RamseyCountyMn.gov/BuildingStrongerTogether).

HARD WORK, PG 1

revitalize the riverfront and the downtown core. It also fits in with the Downtown Alliance's investment strategy which identifies RiversEdge, office-to-housing conversions and better streetscapes as priorities.

But the details of the County's investments are still fuzzy. As decisions are made about where and how to spend \$50 million for "housing" and \$50 million for "public spaces", the County should reach out to the City, the Downtown Alliance and other key partners to make sure their dollars are complementing,

and not competing with, other investments. Ideally, the County, City and Downtown Alliance could work together on a long-range capital plan that chunks downtown development into discrete phases so we can ask our state and federal partners to fund multiple projects at a time. This would get us out of the perennial trap of being asked to choose just one project for funding each year. This work will not be easy but it's worth the effort to get it right. I look forward to partnering with the County to make sure we do the hard work beyond the headlines for the benefit of our whole community.

## Stamp Out Hunger

Fill a bag. Help feed families. Saturday, May 9<sup>TH</sup> 2026

Place non-perishable food near your mailbox and your letter carrier will do the rest!

LETTER CARRIERS' FOOD DRIVE

SECOND SATURDAY IN MAY  
PUT YOUR NON-PERISHABLE DONATION IN A BAG BY YOUR MAILBOX. WE'LL DELIVER IT TO A LOCAL FOOD BANK.

Most needed food list:

[keystoneservices.org/food](http://keystoneservices.org/food)

HIGHLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

For information, visit [highlanddistrictcouncil.org](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org)

COMPOST GIVEAWAY SATURDAY, MAY 2

Give your garden a boost. Pick up free compost made from food scraps at the Environmental Center, while supplies last. Limit 3 bags per household. Details at [ramseycountymn.gov/CompostGiveaway](http://ramseycountymn.gov/CompostGiveaway)

SPRING CLEAN UP IN HIGHLAND PARK ON MAY 9

Meet at Ford Pkwy and Cleveland Ave on Saturday, May 9 at 9 a.m. for supplies and coffee, then pick up trash throughout the neighborhood. We'll offer suggestions on places to clean up. The city will pick up filled trash bags at designated locations.

YOUTH GOLF CLINIC ON MAY 16

A fun, free golf event for youth ages 6 and up on Saturday, May 16 at 1 p.m. at First Tee of Minnesota's site at Highland National Golf Course. Learn the basics of chipping, putting and driving. All equipment will be provided. Free ice cream treats for youth participants. Registration is required. Sign up at <https://firstteeminnesota.org/2026-first-tee-highland-district-council-game-changer-clinic/>  
 Co-hosted by Highland District Council, St. Paul Parks and Recreation and First Tee Minnesota at Highland National Golf Course.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

1978 Ford Pkwy; option to join online. Get the Zoom link, agendas at [highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/calendar).

- HDC Board - Thu, May 7, 7 p.m.
- Transportation - Tue, May 12, 7 p.m.
- Community Development - Mon, May 19, 6:30 p.m.
- Community Engagement - Tue, May 26, 7 p.m.

WEST 7TH COMMUNITY CENTER

265 Oneida, St. Paul

651-298-5493

keystoneservices.org

Check the website for the latest information or call the Center.

Become a Volunteer Meals on Wheels

Many homebound elderly and adults with disabilities are fragile and vulnerable, and most struggle to prepare a nutritious meal. Keystone's Meals on Wheels program is all about choice and friendly service. Learn more or to sign up, call Metro Meals on Wheels at 612-623-3363 and find the provider in your neighborhood.

West 7th Community Center Facilities Upgrade

Exciting improvements are coming to the West 7th Community Center, thanks to support from the MN Dept of Education's Multi Purpose Community Facility Projects Grant. The updates are designed to make the center a more welcoming and accessible space for the community.

Improvements include building wide high speed Wi Fi to support learning and job access, gym, soundproofing, and improved heating and cooling. Restrooms are being renovated for better accessibility, and hydration stations are being added throughout the building.

With about 1,000 neighbors visiting each week, these improvements will help even more people connect, learn, and stay active. Renovations are scheduled to be completed by June!

# BULLETIN BOARD



## SHANTY BOYS OF PINE COUNTY

Through May 9. Art House North Theater. \$20-\$50.

This original musical by Jeremiah Gamble brings Minnesota's lumberjack era to life through traditional Irish and northwoods songs. Centered on the story of itinerant lumberjack Michael Cassius Dean, the production blends storytelling, live music, and regional history into a lively, immersive experience. Developed with input from music historian Brian Miller, the show highlights immigrant contributions to Minnesota's cultural identity while delivering toe-tapping entertainment for all ages. With a small ensemble of storytellers and musicians, the production creatively transforms a simple stage into a vivid frontier world. More info: [www.bucketbrigadetheater.com](http://www.bucketbrigadetheater.com)

**ST. PAUL DOWNTOWN ALLIANCE ANNUAL MEETING**  
May 6, 4-6 p.m. Palace Theatre. Free; RSVP required. Meeting brings together community members, business leaders and stakeholders to share a vision for the future of downtown. The event will unveil ideas generated through the Reimagine Downtown initiative, highlighting strategies to strengthen economic vitality, public spaces and cultural experiences in the city center. Expect presentations, networking opportunities and insights into ongoing and upcoming projects shaping downtown St. Paul. Learn more and register at [downtownstpaul.com](http://downtownstpaul.com).

### A PROMISED LAND: JEWISH PATRIOTS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

May 7, 7-8:30 p.m. Minnesota History Center. \$20. Historian Adam Jortner explores the role of Jewish Americans in shaping religious freedom during the nation's founding. Part of the History Forum series, this lecture offers fresh insight into early American debates on citizenship and liberty. More info: [mnhs.org/events](http://mnhs.org/events)

### COFFEE CHAT: MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE LANGUAGE SCHOOL

May 9, 1:30-2:30 p.m. Historic Fort Snelling. Varies. Learn about the history of Japanese American soldiers trained in Minnesota during World War II. This engaging talk highlights both military contributions and the challenges faced at home. More info: [mnhs.org/events](http://mnhs.org/events)

### WARD 2 ANNUAL MEETING

May 14, 5:30-7 p.m. Neighborhood House at Wellstone Center. Free. Join residents, city staff, and community partners for updates on Ward 2 projects and priorities. The interactive format allows attendees to engage directly with leaders and share feedback. More info: [forms.office.com/g/8yB2320Lx3](http://forms.office.com/g/8yB2320Lx3)

### COURTING HARRY

May 14-June 7. History Theatre \$25-\$70. Trace the journey of Minnesota natives Chief Justice Warren Burger and Justice Harry Blackmun, from their roots in the St. Paul neighborhood to the pinnacle of the nation's highest court. Two lifelong friends, their unbreakable bond now confronted with history-making decisions including the landmark case *Roe v. Wade* that will define their future. Dive into the dynamic tensions of the Supreme Court, more relevant today than ever, where Nixon's appointees grapple with conflicting ideologies in the arena of America's most contentious legal battles. An insightful exploration of friendship, authority, and justice.

Beyond the Bench: Conversations That Bring *Courting Harry* to Life panel discussions on the evolution of constitutional law (May 16, 4:30pm) and abortion law (May 21, 11:45am) and the rule of law today (June 6, 3:45pm) More information at [historytheatre.com](http://historytheatre.com)

### RAMSEY CTY MASTER GARDENERS PLANT SALE

May 16, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Aldrich Arena. Free admission. Gardeners of all experience levels can find inspiration and supplies at this annual plant sale hosted by Ramsey County Master Gardeners. The event features a wide selection of native plants, vegetables, herbs, annuals, perennials and houseplants, along with unique tomato varieties and gardening supplies. Proceeds support UMN Extension programs, including community gardening initiatives and youth education. Knowledgeable volunteers will be available to answer questions and help shoppers

choose plants suited to local growing conditions. More info: [RamseyMasterGardeners.org/plantsale](http://RamseyMasterGardeners.org/plantsale)

### FLINT HILLS FAMILY FESTIVAL

May 29-30, Various times. Ordway Center for the Performing Arts & Rice Park, St. Paul. Free-\$8. The Festival transforms downtown St. Paul into a vibrant celebration of arts and culture for all ages. Featuring both free outdoor performances and low-cost indoor shows, the festival includes returning favorite NOOMA—an interactive opera for babies—and the high-energy violin duo Sons of Mystro. Families can enjoy hands-on art activities, live music, dance, and performances representing diverse cultures. More info: [ordway.org/festival](http://ordway.org/festival)

### WEST END GARAGE SALE

May 30-31, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. West 7th neighborhood, St. Paul. Free. A neighborhood-wide shopping event that draws bargain hunters from across the city. Participants who register by May 15 will have their sale included on a community map and promoted to maximize visibility and foot traffic. The event is an opportunity to declutter, connect with neighbors, and enjoy a lively weekend atmosphere along West 7th. More info: [fortroadded.org/west-end-garage-sale](http://fortroadded.org/west-end-garage-sale)

### 6TH ANNUAL SOAP BOX DERBY

June 2, 5-8 p.m. Hidden Falls Regional Park, St. Paul. Free. Watch young racers take to the hill at the 6th Annual Soap Box Derby, where youth ages 9-14 compete in handcrafted cars they've spent weeks designing and building. Teams from St. Paul and Minneapolis gather for this exciting community event, showcasing creativity, teamwork, and engineering skills. Each participant gets a chance to race, with awards given to the fastest teams in the Twin Cities. The event offers a fun, family-friendly atmosphere and an opportunity to cheer on local youth as they put their hard work to the test. Spectators are encouraged to attend and enjoy the thrill of the race.

### WEST 7TH COMMUNITY FUNDRAISER

June 4, Dinner 5 p.m.; music 7-9:30 p.m. Mancini's Char House. \$25-\$75; VIP \$500. Support the future Dousman Park playground at this lively community fundraiser featuring live music by The Cellar Dwellers. Guests can enjoy a pasta buffet dinner, reserve VIP seating or attend the concert-only portion of the evening. The event blends entertainment with community impact, raising funds for a new playground space designed for families to gather and play. Attendees will also learn about volunteer opportunities and ways to support the project. With a welcoming atmosphere and classic West 7th charm, the evening offers a meaningful way to give back while enjoying food and music. More info: [saintpaulparksconservancy.org/mancinis](http://saintpaulparksconservancy.org/mancinis)

### EVERYTHING IS FREE - BUY NOTHING EVENT

June 6, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. St. Peter's Lutheran Church. Free. "Buy Nothing" event encourages sustainability, reuse, and neighborly connection by offering household items, clothing, and other goods at no cost. Attendees are welcome to browse and take what they need, while donations of gently used items are also encouraged ahead of the event. The goal is to reduce waste while strengthening community ties through sharing. Whether you're looking to declutter or discover something useful, this event offers a simple and meaningful way to give and receive. More info: Email [njcheesebrow@gmail.com](mailto:njcheesebrow@gmail.com).



## TEASE-A-PALOOZA MARKET/BLOCK PARTY

May 9, 3:30-6:30 p.m. Tease Salon and West 7th businesses. Free.

Market returns with an expanded neighborhood block party in collaboration with Hail Mary Piercing and The 620 Club. This multi-location event features a wide range of local artists and vendors offering handmade goods, art, jewelry, and more. Guests can enjoy food from El Jefe Cocina, beverages from Bad Weather Brewing (served by Can Can Wonderland), and a nostalgic 2000s pop-punk dance party. Additional highlights: tiny tattoos, aura photography (including for pets), and giveaways. Tease-A-Palooza offers a lively way to support small businesses and celebrate the creative community. More info: [teasesalonmn.com](http://teasesalonmn.com)

FOR MORE CALENDAR EVENTS, VISIT  
[COMMUNITYREPORTER.ORG/EVENTS](http://COMMUNITYREPORTER.ORG/EVENTS)

## THEATER REVIEW

### Red Herring is a Cold, Clever Jolt of Minnesota Noir

By Zach Murphy

Opening the inaugural Park Square LAB in downtown St. Paul, "Red Herring" serves as the gripping first chapter in a psychological crime series that follows insurance investigator Evelyn Berry (Marci Lucht), unraveling a twisted case in Northern Minnesota after a body is found in the woods with one arm missing. As she digs through the evidence with lawyer Graham Given (Adam Moxness), they clash with incompetent cop Theo Roper (Thomas Matthes) and the play narrows into a contentious interrogation of the victim's mother, Millie Olson (Carolyn Pool), who is hellbent on getting a payout.

Written by Pedro Juan Fonseca and directed by Alex Galick, "Red Herring" is a taut, focused, and enthralling play that covers a lot of snowy ground in its efficient 50-minute runtime. The conflict is palpable, and the atmosphere is somber, intense, and chilling all at once. By staging the characters in a semi-circle of chairs for a significant portion of the duration, Galick successfully mines tension between them, as they leap from their seats, bump heads, and blow past each other like Duluth's frigid winds. Peter Morrow's minimalist sound design lends a cold shiver to the harsh nature of this story. Fonseca's impressive script is remarkably thoughtful. He threads the characters' pasts with the present through skillfully rendered monologues that jolt and surprise with big reveals. The characters are given substantial dimension, each coming with their own complex sets of baggage, and the cast does a stellar job of breathing humanity into these individuals.

In her first major leading role, Marci Lucht commands the stage. Her character is hardened, yet haunted by her past, and she conveys this sense like a seasoned vet. Adam Moxness, who has a background in musical theater, is a revelation in such a serious dramatic role. He has a breathtaking



"Red Herring" served as the opening show in the Park Square LAB series.

moment in the second half of the play that knocked me out of my winter boots. Thomas Matthes, in his big return to the stage, plays against his type, embodying his character with a slimy and confrontational vibe that is a thrill to witness. And then there's the standout Carolyn Pool, who swaps her usual comedic talents for a juicy role as a villainous, grieving mother who is a bottle of stress waiting to shatter.

"Red Herring" is a compelling crime case, but it also runs much deeper than the typical whodunnit. It's an adept examination of trauma, and a reflective character study that stirs up real, heavy emotions. This play emphasizes that sometimes we get distracted by the trails we choose to follow in life. It travels through a landscape of dark territory, but it never loses sight of the instinctive human need to make peace with what hurts us.

*The LAB Series gives Minnesota-based creatives the opportunity to showcase their work at Park Square Theatre without the barrier of rental fees.*

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