

## February 11 City Action Further Decreases Funding Available for Neighborhood Empowerment

Taxpayers and neighborhood residents in Minneapolis continue to see changes in the City commitment to improving neighborhoods and empowering residents.

By now, the Minneapolis City Council's marathon December 13-14 budget meeting is legendary. The Council took further action February 11 to decrease funding available to neighborhoods. Read on for the full chronology:

On December 13, 2010 the Minneapolis City Council, with the support and at the urging of Mayor R.T. Rybak, adopted staff directions with the 2011 Budget that reduced neighborhood access to their Phase II Neighborhood Action Plan allocations from the 100 percent adopted by the Council on June 18, 2010 to 50 percent. Although more than one-third of the residents who spoke at the final public hearing on the budget opposed this action, the Council passed the staff direction with only Council Members Gordon, Hofstede, Lilligren and Reich voting against the restriction. As a result, 39 of the 72 neighborhood organizations receiving NRP

funds no longer have access to any of their Phase II NRP dollars to improve their neighborhoods and the remaining neighborhoods will only be able to access 50 percent of their Phase II allocations. It was repeatedly pointed out by testifiers at the City Council hearing, and acknowledged by Ways and Means Committee Chair Betsy Hodges, that the actions relating to NRP had no impact on the 2011 property tax levy. The arguments had no impact.

The action taken by the Council was taken without any prior consultation or discussion with neighborhood organizations, the NRP Policy Board or NRP staff, or elected officials from the City's legislative delegation. The process used by the City to take this action violates every one of the seven Core Principles of Community Engagement that the City Council and Mayor adopted with much fanfare in December, 2007.

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota conducted an independent analysis of the impact of the property tax reductions that

have been presented as the argument for freezing these funds and found that the benefits of the reduction in the property tax increase (from 6.5% to 4.7%) accrue to the residents of the more stable neighborhoods in the city (primarily Southwest Minneapolis and the Ward represented by Council Member Hodges) and that the taxpayers in the lower income neighborhoods receive a much smaller benefit. The benefit from the property tax impact, for those neighborhoods, was far outweighed by the loss of NRP funds to their residents.

The NRP Policy Board did not agree with the action taken by the City and on January 24 directed its staff to develop a legislative proposal that would clarify the NRP statute and ensure that funds allocated for the improvement of neighborhoods could be used for those purposes. The City appears to believe that it has the authority, under current law, to freeze the NRP funding allocations to neighborhoods and reduce the amounts previously committed to residents and taxpayers.

**(continued on next page)**

## East Phillips Park Cultural and Community Center



Community members got their first look at the East Phillips Park Cultural and Community Center (EPPCCC), Saturday, Jan. 22; the building opened Feb. 28. East Phillips Improvement Coalition NRP funding (\$180,000 plus \$50,000 for fundraising and consulting), and Midtown Phillips Neighborhood Association (\$5,000) assisted in making the new 14,000 square foot building reality. It features a high school-sized gym and adjacent kitchen, a teen center, computer lab, and rooms that will accommodate a variety of programming.

"At 30% more energy efficient than the average building in Minneapolis, the East Phillips building sets a new standard for energy efficiency in Park Board community centers," according to a park board news release. Programming surveys were offered to all guests to help determine what will be available at the center. Surveys will be available at recreation centers and online at [www.minneapolisparcs.org](http://www.minneapolisparcs.org). "I believe the EPPCCC has the duty to... respond to the cultural, spiritual and educational needs of all people," said Brad Pass.

Photos courtesy Angela Schneider, MPRB

# Lawsuit or Legislation? What's Next?

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Some neighborhood leaders, meanwhile, began assessing the possibility of suing the City to remove its contracting freeze. A number of neighborhood leaders have already expressed support for such a suit with resolutions and contributions of private (non-NRP, non-city) dollars for the legal costs that will occur if a suit is pursued. At this time, the neighborhoods appear to favor pursuing the legislative option first, with a suit as a backup action. The support and fundraising activity will probably continue to ensure that a suit can be pursued quickly if the legislative option is unsuccessful.

The City Council and Mayor have now taken an additional action that further reduces the resources for neighborhoods in the future. Government staff and neighborhood leaders have believed that the reservation of dollars from the Tax Increment Financing districts that were approved by the City Council in 2010 would generate an additional \$5 million per year for the city's new Neighborhood and Community Relations (NCR) department and the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC). At least \$3 million of this amount was expected to go to neighborhoods for their community participation activities. This will be the case in 2011. In 2012 and 2013, however, the City Council moved, on February 11, to take

the neighborhood portion of the TIF district funds and put them toward the General Fund of the city. As a result, if the current actions of the Council and Mayor stand, any funds that neighborhoods receive in the future will come from the NRP monies frozen by the City.

The Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission has taken no action and expressed no organizational opposition to the actions taken by the City Council in December or the February 11 action eliminating their neighborhood funding source in 2012 and 2013.

The city is clearly backing away from its often stated support of neighborhoods and taxpayer participation in order to try to find short term solutions to its budget problems. Unfortunately, pursuing these short term actions will come at the expense of investing in the city's neighborhoods and their ability to stabilize and even increase the city's tax base.

The NRP Policy Board is continuing its efforts to ensure that investments in neighborhood improvement occur and that the taxpayers of the city benefit from the creation of stable neighborhoods and increased tax base. This is a quickly changing environment so stay tuned to the news media and legislative websites, as the legislature is asked to act and the drama at City Hall continues.

## Apply by March 25 to Play an Important Role in Redistricting

The new year brings a once-in-a-decade opportunity for people in Minneapolis to participate in redistricting the City, creating boundaries for elections in 2012 and beyond. Having districts with equal populations helps ensure there is fair representation no matter where you live.

Redistricting happens every ten years, following the U.S. Census, and for residents who are interested, there is a new opportunity to play an important role in the redistricting process that's about to start.

In 2010, Minneapolis voters transferred authority for developing new boundaries for the City's thirteen wards and the Park Board's six districts to a Redistricting Group made up of the Charter Commission and an appointed Advisory Group. The Charter Commission is now soliciting

applications for the Advisory Group.

The Charter Commission seeks applicants who will bring diversity to the Redistricting Group, are active citizens, have knowledge of the many communities within the city, and will serve on a nonpartisan basis. Please note that while Advisory Group members are expected to participate in a nonpartisan manner, current or past involvement in political party activities does not disqualify an applicant from service.

The job description and application form are posted on the Charter Commission's website at [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/charter-commission](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/charter-commission).

All applications should be submitted as outlined in the application by the March 25, 2011 deadline. Interviews will be con-



Camden Winterfest, Feb. 5, and the Lake Hiawatha Heart Warmer Feb. 12 were just two of the events that got people out playing in the snow recently. Above, right is Kimberly Caprini, the Winterfest Chili Cookoff winner, whose recipe will be served at a local coffee shop as soup of the day on the 19th of March and April. On the outside page, Brock Hanson of Shingle Creek Neighborhood Association (which sponsored the event with Lind Bohanon Neighborhood Association) served chili while others toasted marshmallows or launched snowballs. At the Heart Warmer, a project of neighborhood organizations and businesses in Standish Ericsson, Longfellow, and Nokomis communities with the Lake Hiawatha Recreation Council, kids hula-hooped for prizes with a deejay at the rink. Sleigh rides and snow sculpture-making on the lake rounded out the day.

Not pictured, but also of note: At the Fire & Ice evening celebration in Prospect Park Feb. 12, residents lined up with holiday trees to fuel the bonfire. CARAG held their Chilly Chili Fest on Feb. 27. With events to plan and to enjoy, a long snowy winter goes more quickly!

ducted in April, 2011.

If your group is interested in a presentation or if you have any questions, call the Commission Coordinator, Peggy Menshek, at 612-673-2287 or email her at [peggy.menshek@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:peggy.menshek@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).

### This is Your Forum

Submit articles and ideas on any topic for the LINK by email to [link@nrp.org](mailto:link@nrp.org). Write between 300 and 600 words stating a problem or opportunity, how you dealt with it, and what you think others could learn from your experiences along the way. High-resolution photos are also welcome.

**Margo Ashmore, editor, 612-673-5103**  
NRP LINK is available in Braille or large print upon request. TTY 612-673-2626. Archives are on [www.nrp.org](http://www.nrp.org) "Resources"-Media.

# In Brief



## ► **Community Research Proposals Due March 15**

Neighborhood Partnerships for Community Research (NPCR) is inviting proposals for the summer 2011 semester. Please see the attached application packet for details on the program and how to apply, or use this link to apply online: <http://www.cura.umn.edu/Programs/ApplicationProcess.php>. The deadline for project proposals is March 15. Approved projects will run from May 30 to August 28, 2011.

NPCR is a consortium of Twin Cities' colleges, universities, and community organizations, that partner with neighborhood and community organizations on applied research projects. Organizations define and direct their research projects, and NPCR recruits and funds research assistance for the project.

## ► **Apply for a Community Garden Lease**

The City of Minneapolis has 13 vacant lots available for qualifying groups to lease for community gardens. These City-owned lots, in North Minneapolis and Phillips neighborhoods, were selected because they are not appropriate for development. This means that they will remain available for years of gardening even as the economy changes and redevelopment picks up. Lots are available first-come, first-served to qualifying groups; not-for-profits or a group with a not-for-profit sponsor. The garden will need to have liability insurance. Applicants should be ready to discuss the layout of the community garden, how it will be managed and how it will engage and benefit the community. For more information, visit [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/homegrown-home.asp) or call 612-673-2597.

## ► **Minneapolis & Saint Paul Home Tour April 30-May 1**

Call 612-673-5140 to be added to the mailing list for the Minneapolis & Saint Paul Home Tour Guide, so you can plan your free, self-guided tour April 30, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and May 1, 1-5 p.m. The Tour features homeowners showing a variety of remodeled homes and food for thought on historic preservation/restoration. "We will also be talking about why it's good to work with your architect or other design professional to plan your work in stages," said Tour coordinator Margo Ashmore. "We'll be offering information on home operating systems and universal design that allows aging in place."

## ► **Home Improvement Presentations Offered**

In partnership with libraries in Hennepin County and Saint Paul, the Minneapolis & Saint Paul Home Tour is offering free presentations in the weeks leading up to the Tour. Some require pre-registration, see [www.hclib.org](http://www.hclib.org) (under "events," sort by library) for details. Subjects include:

- **Green Remodeling: Not an Afterthought** Thursday, April 14, 6:30 p.m. at Washburn Library or Tuesday, April 19, 6:30 p.m. at East Lake Library, presented by Michael Ansel of Otogawa-Anschel Design-Build.

- **Resale Ramifications of Remodeling**, Saturday, April 9, 1-2 p.m. at Pierre Bottineau Library.

- **Redesigning Your Home for Your Lifestyle/Lifetime:**

What's all of the buzz about universal design and aging in place design? Learn how to make simple low-cost/no-cost changes to

your home that can improve safety and function, meet your needs, your lifestyle and look great. Presented by Alissa Boroff of Access Solutions. Choose the time/place most convenient for you: Saturday, April 23, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Dayton's Bluff Library, 645 7th St. E., Saint Paul, MN 55106 or Saturday, April 23, 2 p.m.-3 p.m. at the Hayden Heights Library, 1456 White Bear Ave. N. Saint Paul, MN 55106

## ► **Job/Contract/Career Openings**

When NRP learns of positions open, we post them on our website and on the blog <http://nrpneighborhoods.blogspot.com> and email them in the NRP Digest. Recent postings can be found on [www.nrp.org](http://www.nrp.org).

## ► **Gardening Matters Resource Fair Saturday, April 2**

The 7th Annual Community Garden Resource Fair is set for Saturday, April 2, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at Sabathani Community Center, 310 E. 38th St., Minneapolis. A \$5-\$10 donation is suggested at the door. Parking is free. Open at 8:30 for registration, organizers request people pre-register at [www.gardening-matters.org](http://www.gardening-matters.org). The keynote is at 9 a.m., workshops at 10:40 a.m., 1:00 and 2:20 p.m. At noon, lunch is available for purchase from Marla's Caribbean Cuisine. There will be a kids' activity table. On Friday, April 1, there are two pre-fair half-day workshop options: Youth Gardening, and a Local Food Business Expo. See [gardeningmatters.org](http://gardeningmatters.org) for details or call 612-821-2358.

## ► **Twin Cities Sustainable Communities Conference**

The 6th Annual Twin Cities Sustainable Communities Conference is set for Saturday, April 9, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Central Lutheran Church, 333 12th Street S., Minneapolis 55404 (next to the Convention Center). Carpooling, transit, biking, or walking is suggested, ramp parking is \$9. Keynote presentations feature a video address by Rob Hopkins, co-founder of the TransitionTown Movement from England, and Krista Leraas, co-founder of Backyard Harvest. For more information on the workshops and agenda for this free event, go to [www.afors.org/2011](http://www.afors.org/2011) Conference.

## ► **Grow or Wear Your Mustaches for LHENA**

Lowry Hill East Neighborhood Association supporters are encouraged to grow or wear a 'stache for cash, the opportunity to appear on the front of the Wedge newspaper, or other prizes; Satisfy that need or curiosity about growing facial hair and your \$25 tax-deductible donation will go to the neighborhood group to support community programs that make a difference. Contest sign-up begins March 14 at [www.thewedge.org](http://www.thewedge.org), also available on [www.facebook.com/TheWedgeNeighborhood](http://www.facebook.com/TheWedgeNeighborhood).

## ► **Hennepin County Green Notes**

Hennepin County is now offering electronic media recycling at their drop off facilities. They also have launched a Master Recycler/Composter program to help people who want to become advocates; a training starts in April. Hennepin County Environmental Services staff are available to speak or attend Earth Day-related events. All this and more are covered in Hennepin Green Notes, a monthly email newsletter. To sign up, send an email to [greennotes@co.hennepin.mn.us](mailto:greennotes@co.hennepin.mn.us) with "subscribe" in the subject line.



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**Your neighborhood could do a 365...** People who like to take photographs sign up to each take a day of the week all year long; there are guest photographers and backups. One photograph per day is posted on a blog. It takes very little money and about five minutes a day of a moderator's time. See [www.powderhorn365.com](http://www.powderhorn365.com) for an example, and email [amy@wurdock.com](mailto:amy@wurdock.com) for information on how to do it. Above is the Powderhorn 365 exhibit at Vine Arts Gallery.

**NRP Policy Board Report January 2011**

• Approved NRP Phase II Neighborhood Action Plans for Cedar Isles Dean, \$261,420 and Downtown Minneapolis \$913,167 of NRP Program Funds.

**NRP Policy Board Report February 2011**

• Approved NRP Phase II Neighborhood Action Plans for Hawthorne, \$1,593,541 of NRP Program Funds.

For other actions, see articles in this LINK.

**Complete reports: [www.nrp.org/R2/AboutNRP/PB/PBMeetingReps.html](http://www.nrp.org/R2/AboutNRP/PB/PBMeetingReps.html)**

**Policy Board Meets 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. (arrive early to go through security)**

Remaining 2011 Dates: Mar. 28, May 23, June 27, July 25,  
Aug. 22, Sept. 26, Oct. 24, Nov. 21, Dec. 19

**Room C-2350 Hennepin County Gov't Center, 300 South 6th Street**

**Winter Festivals Abound**

see inside, page 2 for details

