

UPDC

Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes

May 20, 2025

Chair: Kirsten Fryer

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Jenny Keyser, Lisa Nelson, David Tierney

Staff: Leah Timberlake Sullivan, Executive Director, Union Park District Council

Jason Elyea-Wheeler, Project Manager

Assign Note Taker

Jerry Clendenin will take notes and type the minutes for the May 20 meeting.

An Introduction

Jason Elyea-Wheeler was recently hired as a Project Manager. He graduated from Hamline University in April, 2025.

Before coming to UPDC, he worked with the Hamline Midway Coalition

Change for NSVC Chair

Yvonne Hundshamer has resigned from Union Park District Council (UPDC) Board.

She committed to be the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC) chair for one year. The year is over

Kirsten Fryer volunteered to be the chairperson for the May 20 meeting and a few more meetings.

We will select a permanent chair at future meetings within a few weeks.

Open Forum

Circle Ministry at Bethlehem Lutheran in the Midway

Kirsten Fryer announced that Bethlehem Lutheran will host the weekly Circle Ministry on May 22, Thursday. The event begins at begins at 6 p.m.

The Circle Ministry is a round table for neighborhood people to share and to listen. It is a place for discussion of things that that matter to them.

Bethlehem Lutheran is near Snelling and University at 436 Roy Street North. Food will be served before the Circle Ministry from 5 to 6 p.m.
All are welcome.

For more information see the website at *[bethlehem-midway dot org](http://bethlehem-midway.org)*.

Update on the No-Mow Project at Merriam Park

Jerry Clendenin provided a reminder about the No-Mow Area maintenance event at Merriam Park. It is scheduled for Saturday, June 21, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Pulling out weeds will be the principal activity.

Jerry has inspected the No-Mow Area. On the weed front, the Purslane weeds are almost entirely eliminated. Ragweed is under control, although some is still there. Many thistles have been cut down. Overall, we have made progress.

We need to put some grass seed near the wood steps.

All are encouraged to volunteer.

The 2025 Minnesota Compass Annual Meeting

Leah Timberlake Sullivan encouraged NSVC members to attend the Minnesota Compass Annual Meeting on May 21.

Minnesota Compass is an organization that gathers demographic and economic data about Minnesota. The organization is important because it can improve the results from the next U.S. Census in 2030.

Leah noted an obvious problem with the 2020 U.S. Census. It said that Groveland-Highland Park had more non-English speakers than Union Park. This is probably an incorrect result.

The annual meeting is on Wednesday, May 21, from 8:30 to 11 a.m. The in-person event is at Wilder Center, 451 North Lexington Parkway, Saint Paul. Citizens can join the meeting on line at [mncompass\(dot\)org](https://mncompass.org)

Preparing for Play Streets & Block Parties

Lisa Nelson introduced the topic of play streets.

The prime season for closing a street for fun is from May through early fall. Neighbors can close a street to use the street as a play area for children or for neighborhood Block Parties.

UPDC helps neighborhood groups to set up for play streets and block parties.

The Saint Paul Jay Cees have given a grant to UPDC to encourage block parties and play streets. The grant is for \$1,700. The grant is enough to set up two or three block parties or play streets. Lisa Nelson intends to use some left-over cash to make an on-line video to explain play streets and block parties.

To close a street, a neighborhood group needs a permit from the City of Saint Paul. In order to get the permit, the neighborhood group needs to get neighbors to sign a petition.

The petition form and other necessary forms can be found on the City of Saint Paul website. Look for Department of Police and Special Events and Permitting under the Community Engagement Division.

How to Close a Street

To use the street, a neighborhood group also needs barricades to keep cars from driving in during the event. Barricades are available from the Union Park District Council. Go to the UPDC website and find “Resources & Projects.” On the drop-down menu, find “Barricade Rental.” There is a form to reserve barricades.

Neighborhood groups can also get Barricades from the City of Saint Paul, but they are more expensive.

There are requirements for streets that can be used as play street or for block parties:

- The street must be entirely residential.
- The street cannot be a Metro Transit route.
- The street must be not connected to an arterial street.

Cultivating More Friends for Midway Peace Park

Jenny Keyser provided an update on Midway Peace Park.

The organization called Friends of Midway Peace Park is working on finding more supporters for the park. Jenny Keyser said that the Friends of the Midway Park is Co-operating with other groups.

Several organizations have supported the park from the beginning:

- Students at Gordon Parks High School
- Concordia University of Saint Paul
- Union Park District Council
- Lexington-Hamline Community Council

The Friends of Midway Peace Park are encouraging more people from these organizations to work on projects that support the park.

The Fourth Anniversary of the opening of Midway Peace Park is in June, 2025.

Working with Great River Greening

Friends of Midway Peace Park is developing a relationship with Great River Greening. Great River Greening does projects for land restoration. Great River Greening works to plant trees around low-income housing. Friends of Midway Peace Park is encouraging people in Skyline Tower to volunteer to plant trees around Skyline Tower.

Working with People at Skyline Tower

Volunteers from Skyline Tower help to clean and maintain the park. The Friends of Midway Peace Park is encouraging more Skyline residents to support the park.

The Friends of the Park are working with community leaders at Skyline Tower to set up a meeting with Skyline residents. The goal of the meeting will be to encourage more Skyline residents to support park.

The meeting will be on June 10. The time and the room have yet to be determined.

A Soccer Event at Midway Peace Park

On May 8 there was a youth soccer night at Midway Peace Park. It was planned by CommonBond Communities and Minnesota United Foot Ball Club. The event was supported by Friends of Midway Peace Park.

Professional soccer players from Minnesota United conducted soccer drills. The professionals showed high school and junior high school players how to improve playing skills.

The soccer night started with players from Skyline Tower. However, buses arrived with young players from other CommonBond communities.

There was also a food truck.

Staff Report

Opening Day for Metro Transit B Line

Union Park District Council members will participate in events for the opening day for the new Metro Transit B Line. Leah Timberlake Sullivan outlined UPDC activities for the B Line celebration.

The new Metro Transit B Line will begin service on June 14, Saturday. The B Line will be a bus rapid transit line. It will replace bus route 21 and provide improved service.

On June 14 there will be an official celebration. The four-hour event will start with a Ribbon Cutting event At Union Depot at 10:00 a.m.

Opening. At 10:45 the ceremonial first rides will leave from Union Depot in Saint Paul. Rides on the B Line will be free on June 14

At Union Depot there will be food trucks and cookies for kids.

Metro-Transit staff will be at B Line station stops to answer questions. UPDC volunteers will also be at the stations to encourage Union Park residents to use the new service.

UPDC volunteers will be setting up welcoming tables along the 11 stops in St. Paul along the route to help with the new service.

UPDC is organizing tours of shopping venues served by the B Line.

UPDC Air Quality Monitoring Workshop

Union Park District Council is setting up a program to work on air quality. UPDC is working in co-operation with the AIRNET program from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

Leah said that we are planning for two meetings of the UPDC Air Monitoring Project.

The first meeting will be on Tuesday, May 27, from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at Spruce Tree Center. Spruce Tree Center is at 1600 University Avenue (University & Snelling). The meeting will be in Suite 301.

Minnesota Pollution Control agency experts will discuss air quality quality in general. There will be a discussion of how air quality and pollution is measured.

They will discuss the health effects of air pollution. The program will cover what you can do to protect yourself and your family.

Leah said that the Air Monitoring Project will encourage citizens to take action steps to work for cleaner air.

There is more information in the Neighborhood Matters Newsletter Mid-May issue and the June issue.

Snelling & University Alliance Receives a Grant

Leah announced that the Snelling & University Alliance has received a Ramsey County Critical Corridors Planning Grant. We requested the grant in early spring. The Alliance received the grant for \$50,000 in May.

The Alliance is dedicated to revitalizing the neighborhoods around the intersection of Snelling and University

The UPDC is one of several organizations that support the Alliance. Every UPDC committee has members who have volunteered to serve with the Snelling & University Alliance.

The grant will be used to create a comprehensive plan for improvements and development in the area bordered by Hamline Avenue on the east, Fairview Avenue on the west, Minnehaha Avenue on the north, and Dayton Avenue on the south.

With the grant the organization can hire a person. The person's main task will be to create a planning document.

The address is [snellinganduniversity\(dot\)org](http://snellinganduniversity(dot)org).

Capital Region Watershed District

Leah is working on getting someone from the Capital Region Watershed District to give a talk at one of our meetings.

Someone from the Watershed District could talk about things that citizens can do to maintain and improve water quality.

An important project is the "Adopt A Drain" program. A small group of volunteers works to keep one storm sewer drain open. "Adopt A Drain" and other projects are important to reduce the amount of trash, debris, and pollution that flows to local lakes and the Mississippi River.

Minutes
Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee
May, 2025

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.