

Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, February 23, 2026 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Jerome Benner, Scott Berger, K. C. Cox, Jim Marti, Mark Morrow, Ben Quam, Bill Richtman, Deanna Seppanen, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence: Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests: Jim Brummer (University of St. Thomas), Amy McDonough (University of St. Thomas), Chuck Evens (Damon Farber Landscape Architects), Ian Greasley

Media: Jane McClure

1. Welcome and Introductions; Consent Agenda

Mark Morrow, co-chair of the Union Park District Council (UPDC) Committee on Land Use and Economic Development (CLUED), welcomed members of the committee and members of the community.

The January 26, 2026 meeting minutes were approved.

The February 23, 2026 meeting agenda was approved with the following modifications:

- action item follow-up, presented by Mark Morrow;
- reminder to submit public comment to MNDOT regarding Rethinking I-94, presented by Jim Marti.

2. Action Item Follow Up

- Request to the local colleges and universities (University of St. Thomas, Concordia, Macalester, Hamline) for student economic analyses of the recent decrease in the market value of apartment buildings in the twin cities metro area:
Jerome Benner discussed UPDC's request with UST's Dean of the Opus Business School, who forwarded the request to a professor in the Real Estate program. Because it would deviate from their curriculum and would stretch their capacity, the professor declined the project.
- Variance Request for United Village Hotel length 43.1% (50% required), and area 23.3% (30% required).
The variance request was heard by the Board of Zoning Appeals on February 17, 2026.
A motion to deny the variance failed. A motion to approve the variance failed.
United Village will appeal the variance request to the City Council.

3. Noise Variance for Minnesota Run Series – Mightysippi 10 Mile

The promoter did not respond to invitations to discuss their noise variance request.

4. University of St. Thomas Grotto and Stations of the Cross Trail Restoration Project presented by Jerome Benner, Jim Brummer, and Amy McDonough (University of St. Thomas), and Chuck Evens (Damon Farber Landscape Architects)

The grotto and stations of the cross trail are in the southwest corner of the UST campus. The area is identified in campus maps, is open to the public, and is accessible by walking, bike, and public transportation. The grotto area, which includes a stone plaza and path, was renovated in 1993-1994, and is in fairly good condition. Adjacent to the grotto is a ravine and a small stream which extends

beneath a Mississippi River Boulevard bridge. In the 1940s, a trail with the stations of the cross was installed. Both the trail and the stations of the cross have significantly deteriorated. The grotto and ravine are in the Mississippi River Corridor Critical Area (MRCCA) Zone, with a portion of the ravine designated as Bluff Impact Zone (BIZ).

Mr. Evens presented plans to restore the grotto and reclaim the stations of the cross trail. Though there have been no major safety incidents in this area, UST considers safety a top priority. Safety improvements will include a redesign of the trail from a dead-end path to a loop, and the installation of an emergency call box. UST also seeks to minimize the environmental impact of installation and maintenance, and to improve the durability of the hardscape. The stations of the cross trail will be crushed stone with limestone retaining walls on both sides. There will be bollard lights along the trail. Each of the stations of the cross will be 6 feet tall.

Mr. Evens presented 2 possible routes for the trail. The shorter path is the preferred design, but would only be allowed if the Department of Safety and Inspections determines that each station of the cross does not fall under the Bluff Impact Zone's definition of a structure.

UST hopes to complete the project by August, 2026.

Comments included:

- Appreciation that the space is available to the public.
- Appreciation of the proposal.
- A request for installation of way-finding to the area.

5. Reminder to submit comments regarding Rethinking I-94 by March 9, 2026 presented by Jim Marti

Mr. Marti encouraged everyone to submit their thoughts about I-94's redesign to MNDOT by the March 9, 2026 deadline. Mr. Marti noted that MNDOT did not include an at-grade boulevard option, despite support for this option by a number of organizations including UPDC.

Ms. Timberlake Sullivan informed the committee that, due to disruptions caused by recent federal actions, UPDC submitted a request to the governor, MNDOT, and the mayor to extend the comment period.

6. Grid 7 Development presented by Leah Timberlake Sullivan

ACTION: Request a meeting with Councilmember Molly Coleman, City Attorney Irene Kao, and Assistant Mayor Nick Stumo-Langer in order to identify the steps that the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) and the City can and should take to address demolition and construction violations.

Residents who live near the University of St. Thomas (Grid 7 [represented by Sarah Dvorak] and Grid 8 [represented by Tim Flanigan]) have reported a number of demolition and construction violations to the City, as well as to Councilmember Coleman and Union Park District Council. The reported violations include:

Location	Developer	Concern	Date Reported to DSI
2133 Selby Avenue	Micheal B Johnson	demolition without a permit (09/19/2025); failure to properly protect the boulevard tree; dumpster on the boulevard, partially blocking the sidewalk	09/22/2025

2143 Selby	Elliot Capital Group LLC	demolition without measures to mitigate the spread of lead and asbestos dust; inaccessible posting; inaccessible notification packet; removal of protective fencing	11/2025-12/2025
2149 Selby	Elliot Capital Group LLC	demolition without measures to mitigate the spread of lead and asbestos dust; inaccessible posting; inaccessible notification packet; bringing materials into the property from the side street	11/2025-12/2025
2030 Laurel Avenue	Eric and Liz Vogstrum	demolition without a permit (12/20/2025)	
175 Cretin Avenue North	Eric and Liz Vogstrum	demolished without the proper postings, notifications or safety/erosion control	02/04/2026
2094 Goodrich Avenue	Eric and Liz Vogstrum	demolition without a permit, proper postings, notifications, or safety/erosion control	02/11/2026
2033 Ashland Avenue	Robert Dickhausen	open foundation without a safety fence	

Comments included:

- Descriptions of experiences with St. Paul’s and Minneapolis’s permitting processes and demolition-construction monitoring processes.
- Descriptions of Minneapolis’s consequences for nonadherence to requirements, including the cancellation of contractors’ licenses to work in the city, and the use of chain link fencing and clearly displayed signage to enforce a “Stop Work” order.
- Concern that DSI has repeatedly failed to ensure contractor adherence and enforce consequences for nonadherence, despite vigorously enforcing consequences for homeowner nonadherence with lawn mowing and trash clean up.
- Comment that DSI’s approach to violations (we lead with education) assumes that violators are ignorant of St. Paul’s requirements.
(This, in turn, assumes that DSI’s contractor licensing program fails to assess and ensure contractor knowledge of requirements.)
- Concern that DSI has created an environment where rule-following is optional, which places rule-followers at a competitive disadvantage.

A motion was made, seconded, and approved (unanimously) to request a meeting with Councilmember Molly Coleman, City Attorney Irene Kao, and Assistant Mayor Nick Stumo-Langer in order to identify the steps that DSI and the City can and should take to address demolition and construction violations.

**7. Staff Report & Announcements
presented by Leah Timberlake Sullivan**

- Concerts at United Village –
Breakaway Festival
Friday, June 26, 2026 – Saturday, June 27, 2026

<https://www.breakawayfestival.com/festival/minnesota-2026>

Great Lawn Concert Series

Friday, May 29, 2026

Friday, July 24, 2026

Friday July 31, 2026

Friday, August 14, 2026

Friday, September 18, 2026

- CLUED members are welcome to volunteer, and may be asked, to participate in the development of the Union Park Community Plan (10-year plan). This will include the creation of topic-specific community surveys (Land Use and Economic Development, Transportation, Parks and Recreation, Housing, Natural Resources and the Environment, Historic Preservation). The Housing Taskforce, lead by Reece Johnson, has written its survey, which has been available through a link in the UPDC newsletter since December, 2025.
- Merriam Park neighbors will be surveyed about the park, including the no mow area.
- UPDC is working with the Regional Director of Programming, Common Bond, and representatives of Skyline Tower to identify and address Skyline Tower residents ongoing needs caused by water damage last October. Residents in about 250 of the 500 units were affected.
- The Snelling-University Alliance had its second meeting today.



Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, January 26, 2026 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Scott Berger, Rachel Callanan, K. C. Cox, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, Joe Hughes, Reece Johnson, Jim Marti, Mark Morrow, Bill Richtman

Committee member excused absence:

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan, Catherine Kane

Guests: Cole Hanson (Safe Homes Saint Paul), Brian Harrison (Red Maple Ventures), Mike Hahm (United Village), Joe Abraham

Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, December 15, 2025 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Paul Bakke, Scott Berger, K. C. Cox, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, David Guetschow, Reece Johnson, Jim Marti, Mark Morrow, Bill Richtman, Deanna Seppanen, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence:

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests:

Union Park District Council
MINUTES / Committee on Land Use and Economic Development
Monday, October 20, 2025 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting

Co-chairs: Dean Cummings and Mark Morrow

Committee meeting minutes submitted by: Mark Morrow

Committee members present: Paul Bakke, Scott Berger, Rachel Callanan, Dean Cummings, Tim Flanigan, Joe Hughes, Reece Johnson, Mark Morrow, Ben Quam, Bill Richtman, Paul Toman

Committee member excused absence: Jim Marti

Staff present: Leah Timberlake Sullivan

Guests: Mike Hahm (United Village),
Beth Commers (Saint Paul Department of Human Rights & Equal Economic Opportunity (HREEO),
Deputy Director Human Rights & Labor Standards),
beth.commers@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Der Vue (Saint Paul Department of Safety & Inspections, Fire Safety Supervisor),
der.vue@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Reka Suranyi