

UPDC Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2025

Chair: Yvonne Hundshamer

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Kirsten Fryer, Jenny Keyser, David Tierney

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

I. Approval of Minutes

David Tierney moved to approve the November 2024 minutes.

Jenny Keyser seconded the motion.

The November minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Status of October Minutes

Some members wanted corrections to the October 2024 Minutes. Leah volunteered to edit the October Minutes. She will bring them to the February meeting for review and approval.

Assign Note Taker

Jerry Clendenin will take notes and type the minutes at the January 21 meeting.

Planning for the 2025 Micro-Grants

The Micro-Grants provide funds for small projects that bring residents together through activities in their community. Other goals for the Micro-Grant Program are described on the Union Park District Council (UPDC) website.

Dates for 2025 Micro-Grant Applications

February	UPDC Board approves budget including Micro-Grants funds
February UPDC Newsletter	An announcement that applications for Micro-Grants will soon be accepted.
March 15, Friday	Deadline to apply for Micro-Grants with priority for funding.
April 22 NSVC meeting	NSVC meeting to approve grants.
May Board Meeting	UPDC Board reviews & approves grants.

Those interested in grants can review the Union Park District Council *Micro-Grant Guidelines* at the UPDC Website. Look under “Resources & Projects.” Citizens can apply using the Union Park *Micro-Grant Application* at the UPDC Website. Micro-Grant information is also available on the UPDC Google Drive.

The Micro-Grants are for up to \$400.

Priority for Funding

Grant requests submitted by March 15 will have priority for funding. After the priority projects are funded, other projects may receive money from remaining funds.

Proposals submitted after March 15 will be approved on a “rolling basis.”

Reviewing the 2024 Work Plan

NSVC members reviewed the 2024 Work Plan. The 2024 Work Plan stated what the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC) planned to do in 2024.

In the spreadsheet below, the left-hand column states what we planned to do in 2024. The right-hand column has comments about what we actually accomplished for the year 2024. The comments on our accomplishments are a summary of comments made at the January 21, 2025, meeting.

Activity & Anticipated Outcomes	Comments/Discussion When the Activity Was Adopted in February, 2024	<i>Achieved Outcomes as of January, 2025</i>
Host 10 committee meetings	Accepted without discussion.	<i>NSVC held 10 meetings. Goal achieved!</i>
Ensure community has proper notifications of meetings, events, and other activities through available resources	Accepted without discussion.	<i>NSVC meetings were announced by electronic means and in the Villager paper. Goal achieved!</i>
Manage the Cell Tower Fund in partnership with the City of St. Paul.	We discussed a chronic problem. We vote to provide funds for projects, but the projects often do not get completed! For 2024, we discussed how we can work with the City of Saint Paul to create better ways to request grants.	<i>Leah reported that UPDC was reimbursed for all community events. She said that we still have problems in getting financial reports from the City. Goals partially achieved.</i>

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Micro-Grants	The 2024 Micro-Grant program is up and running! It is similar to the 2023 program.	<i>The NSVC provided funds for 5 worthwhile projects. We need improvements in the funding process. However, the main goals were achieved.</i>
United Village development	There was no discussion about this new activity.	<i>NSVC did not do anything about United Village.</i>
Continue engagement with Midway Peace Park	Committee members support continued engagement with Midway Peace Park. • We also discussed following up with the project to make water available in the park. • We see a need to monitor trees so that the recently planted trees survive.	<i>Several events show that we achieved our goals:</i> <i>*On May 30, NSVC took part in the anniversary of the opening of the park.</i> <i>* On June 1 the water supply was turned on.</i> <i>* NSVC members supported tree planting. The trees have survived.</i>
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Park events	The events that we continue to support include: ● Desnoyer Park summer Picnic ● Midway Peace Park Fall Fun Event ● Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam ● Desnoyer Park Winter Fire & Ice We need some kind of UPDC presence or activity at Iris Park.	<i>We achieved our goals for park events.</i> <i>Cell Tower funds supported four events.</i> <i>NSVC also supported a new event called Winter Glow at Merriam Park.</i>
No-Mow Area maintenance/improvements	Jerry Clendenin will suggest dates for three maintenance events. Volunteers will work at the events.	<i>NSVC achieved our goals for the No-Mow Area.</i> <i>We had a summer maintenance event and a fall event. However, almost all Ragweed was removed during several informal work periods.</i> <i>NSVC members also planted grass seed.</i>
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Survey of residents near Merriam Park	The survey will determine if nearby residents want to set up a Merriam Park Association similar to the Desnoyer Park Improvement Association.	<i>NSVC members did a survey by asking members of the Merriam Park Design Advisory Committee. We determined the level of interest in a new Improvement Association.</i>
Addressing climate change and climate resilience efforts locally	Ellen Fee said that we should: ● Send one letter about climate change to an appropriate official. ● We should also have one expert give a relevant talk at an NSVC meeting. Jerry Clendenin links climate change to the loss of Ash trees. We are seeing heat record after heat record. Loss of trees make Union Park neighborhoods hotter and hotter. He suggests a program to education residents on how to work the City of Saint Paul on replacing the lost trees as fast as possible.	<i>NSVC did not accomplish anything about climate change in 2024.</i>
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Inclusive civic engagement	Continue to improve relationships with people at Skyline Tower.	<i>NSVC made a start on this activity. We explored the idea of starting a Skyline Tower association.</i>
Host or participate in community engagement events	Make Midway Peace Park Fall Fun event an annual event. Continue to support Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam.	<i>NSVC members supported ICPB&J. NSVC did not make the Midway Peace Park an annual event because it still does not have solid funding. NSVC members participated in many other events.</i>
Maintain relationship with Union Park	Ellen Fee and Kirsten Fryer are members of the UPDC Board of Directors.	<i>Goal achieved!</i>
Community gardens	The two community gardens are doing well. They can ask for help when they need help.	<i>UPDC is the financial steward for the gardens.</i>
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Connect residents with neighborhood resources and assets	Ellen Fee talked about creating an updated Union Park map. The map will show the locations of services. She said that this is an appropriate project for an intern.	<i>A map was added to the UPDC website in 2024. The map shows non-profit organizations and many other resources. NSVC made progress toward this goal.</i>
Placemaking	Leah is looking at ways to acquire bicycle racks that identify that they are located in "Union Park." She is in contact with Saint Paul Public Works. We discussed how to create the "Union Park Brand." The brand needs to show that Merriam Park and 6 other neighborhoods are parts of Union Park. We discussed ideas for a new Union Park map or diagram. We discussed the Union Park logo.	<i>We did not make much progress on this activity.</i>
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Advocate for improvements to Merriam Park	A major issue is the playground equipment for children. Alice Messer, Design & Construction Manager for Saint Paul Parks & Recreation, visited the NSVC meeting for October, 2023. She said there is a priority list of parks that are due to get new playground equipment. Merriam Park has a lower priority than some other parks. We discussed how to lobby to move Merriam Park to a higher up position on the list. Another issue is the need to repair the Merriam Park Rec Center building.	<i>The NSVC got the Merriam Park Design Advisory Committee off to a start.</i>
Engage with and advocate for Merriam Park renters	We discussed the idea of providing welcome packages for renters that are moving in to Union Park. Joseph Hughes is a UPDC Board member and a landlord. We will ask him for ideas on how to engage with renters.	<i>We did not make any progress on this activity.</i>

The Annual Work Plan is a document required by the City of Saint Paul.

Adjourn

Yvonne Hundshamer made a motion to adjourn. Kirsten Fryer seconded. The members voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:15 p.m.