

UPDC

Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee Meeting Minutes

March 18, 2025

Chair: Kirsten Fryer

Committee Attendance: Jerry Clendenin, Barb Deming, Reece Johnson, Jenny Keyser, Sande Traudt

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

A quorum was present for the meeting.

Introductions

Yvonne Hundshamer did not attend the March 18 meeting. Kirsten Fryer served as the chair.

Reece Johnson attended for the first time.

Reece Johnson recently joined the UPDC Board. He is Interested in housing issues including ensuring housing stability and protections for tenants. He is also interested in policies that uplift lower income citizens.

Approval of Minutes

Jenny Keyser moved to approve the February minutes. Barb Deming seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Assign Note Taker

Jerry Clendenin will take notes and type the minutes for the March 18 meeting.

Open Forum

Award for Midway Peace Park

Jenny Keyser said that Midway Peace Park is receiving an award for community and college engagement. The award is for the work of the Friends of Midway Peace Park to collaborate with Concordia University. Concordia property is directly adjacent to the park.

Cutting Down Thistles at the No-Mow Area

Jerry Clendenin has a new (used) garden tool. He will use it to cut down thistles at the No-Mow Area of Merriam Park.

In 2024, volunteers removed almost all of the Ragweed from the No-Mow Area. In 2025, our goal is to remove all thistles.

In 2024, volunteers also planted new grass seed in the No-Mow Area. Barb Deming noted that in early spring grass is coming up from the seeds.

Micro-Grant Review

Leah Timberlake Sullivan said that the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee has received two applications for Micro-Grants.

The deadline to apply for Micro-Grants with priority for funding is April 15.

The NSVC will consider and vote on Micro-Grant requests at the April 15 meeting.

Requests for Cell Tower Funds

We will vote on Cell Tower funds for events at the April 15 meeting.

Requests for grants from the Cell Tower Funds are initiated at the Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee (NSVC). In past years, Cell Tower funds have been provided for three legacy events. They are listed in the table below.

A Summary of Cell Tower Funds for Legacy Events
Approved by the NSVC for 2024
(from the March, 2024, NSVC Minutes)

Ice Cream Peanut Butter & Jam	\$4,000
Desnoyer Park Picnic	\$3,500
Desnoyer Fire & Ice Winter Event	\$600

The above three legacy events also receive funds from sources outside of the Union Park District Council (UPDC) and the Cell Tower Fund.

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In past years, Cell Tower Funds have also been used for the Midway Peace Park Fall Fun Event. However, the Midway Peace Park event is not considered to be an annual legacy event. This is because the Peace Park event does not have any funding sources outside of the UPDC.

**Additional Funds Approved by the NSVC for 2024
(from the July, 2024, NSVC Minutes)**

Midway Peace Park Fall Fun Event	\$3,500

A new group called “Friends of Merriam Park” organized an outdoor winter event at Merriam Park. It was called “Winter Glow” and it was set for March 1st. However, the weather was too warm for a winter event and it was canceled.

We will consider funding for the Merriam Park Winter Glow event for the winter of 2025-2026.

Improving the Quality of Life at Skyline Tower

Some NSVC members have been in touch with people at Skyline Tower. They discussed ideas to improve the quality of life for Skyline residents.

There is a sewing club at Skyline Tower. Members of the club work on making clothing for themselves and relatives and friends. NSVC members and Skyline residents are looking for someone willing to donate a used sewing machine for the club.

There is a concern to prevent senior isolation at Skyline Tower. NSVC members and the Skyline people discussed the idea of connecting Skyline residents the staff of a nearby nursing home. Some nursing homes have staff members with expertise on helping with senior isolation.

We also discussed the idea of getting some additional benches placed near Skyline Tower. The idea is for places for seniors (and others) to rest while out on walks.

Snelling & University Alliance Update

Leah reported that some organizations and individuals are working to set up the Snelling & University Alliance, also called the Snelling & University Task Force. The Alliance is not yet up and running, so the Union Park District Council is acting for the Alliance.

Every UPDC committee has members who have volunteered to serve with the Snelling & University Alliance.

Leah discussed an application for a Critical Corridor Grant. On behalf of the Alliance, the UPDC has applied for a Critical Corridor Grant from Ramsey County. The application is due by April 1.

The grant is to improve 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.

We will soon be updating the Union Park District Council 10-year plan. The new plan will include work from the Snelling & University Alliance. The current 10-year plan is called the Union Park Community Plan for District 13. The UPDC plan is an Addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan adopted in November, 2016.

Requesting Speakers to Talk at NSVC Meetings

NSVC members at the March 18 meeting discussed speakers that we might request to talk at future meetings.

Some ideas include:

- A speaker on native plant gardening from the organization called Growing Green Hearts.
- A speaker on the stories of immigrants from the staff of the Sahan Journal.
- A speaker on the Preservation of Somali oral history from the Minnesota Humanities Commission.
- An official from the Parks & Recreation who can explain park maintenance practices.

Preparing for Projects

Play Streets

Setting up play streets is an annual project. A play street project requires coordinating with the City of Saint Paul. The City allows us to temporarily close a street to cars. We set up barriers. Then we make use of the street to organize play activities for children.

At the April or May meeting, the NSVC needs to think about and discuss setting up the play streets for 2025.

Working with the Capital Region Watershed District

The Capital Region Watershed District has many projects to control rain water flowing on non-permeable surfaces (concrete and asphalt). Many of the projects control pollution in the water.

Organizations and individuals can cooperate on a range of projects. The simplest is called “Adopt a Storm Drain.” The Watershed District will work with citizens on more complex projects like installing Curb-Cut Rain Gardens.

We are planning a joint meeting with the Committee on Land Use and Economic development (CLUED). We will invite a speaker from the Watershed District. We can discuss Watershed District projects and consider possible cooperation on Watershed District projects.

Starting A Housing Task Force

Leah yielded the time set aside for a staff report to Reece Johnson.

Reece Johnson recently became a member of the Union Park District Council Board.

Reece Johnson is starting a housing task force. He discussed his goal to develop a wholistic plan for housing in Saint Paul.

The task force is to address the different housing needs and the problems of different groups. To start planning, he is looking for data related to housing.

Leah said we can provide money from the ordinary budget of the UPDC for food or beverages for meetings related to the task force.

We will plan for Reece to come to a future meeting with a proposal for a housing plan.

Adjourn

Jenny Keyser made a motion to adjourn. Sande Traudt seconded. The members voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:30 p.m.