

# Waite Park

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The budget for the remaining construction costs is about \$10 million — and the city expects to open bids Feb. 28. Johnson said the city is planning for the amphitheater to have 15-20 national acts each year, as well as community events.

"Nothing is off the table," she said. The design for the amphitheaters, which will hold 4,000-5,000 people sitting or standing, will feature the "rustic quarry feel," Johnson said.

"We're really trying to highlight the beautiful site that it is," she said of the former quarry south of Parkway Drive and east of 17th Avenue South.

Construction will begin this spring, and Johnson estimates it will be completed in May 2020.

"We're very excited to see what this will bring to our community," she said.

## Projects spur redevelopment

Waite Park saw developments of all sizes — from small remodels at shops to large multi-complex additions — in 2018, according to Jon Noerenberg, planning and community development director.

"The most visible that we're happy to see coming online are the hotels and event center in the former Tri-County manufactured home park," he said. "That's been a great success to see that first hotel open up, and hopefully the other hotel and event center (will) follow in the near future."

Noerenberg said the development will help spur new redevelopment in the area.

Other recent business development projects Noerenberg highlighted are Crooked Pint opening in the former Sammy's Pizza, St. Cloud Toyota expanding into the former Dunham's Discout Sports, and the new Crossroad Lofts & Shops mixed-use and residential building approved near Crossroads Center.

More development could come to the city's south side soon, too.

"An interesting project that's industrial in nature to start with — but will hopefully transition into something else — is ... a mining project adjacent to Highway 15 and Granite View Road," Noerenberg said.

"That's going to pull quite a bit of material out of that ground over the next few

years, and then the reclaimed land, once it's all done, will be more essentially shovel ready for permanent development out there," he added. "We've had some interest in that area, but there's quite a bit of granite in there."

The city is also working with Stearns County to study a possible roundabout at 28th Avenue South and Stearns County Road 138, south of Fleet Farm. The roundabout, which would make the busy intersection safer, could be built next year, Noerenberg said.

## City leads in tackling sex trafficking

Waite Park and other area cities and agencies have dedicated many resources to combat sex trafficking in the past few years — and the effort is paying off.

Last year, the Central Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force was created. It's a collaborative approach between Stearns County Sheriff's Office, Stearns County Attorney's Office, Waite Park Police Department, St. Cloud Police Department and advocacy groups such as Central Minnesota Sexual Assault Center and Terebinth Refuge.

The city also let Terebinth Refuge, a sanctuary for sex trafficking survivors, use a house it owned.

It's important work, according to Police Chief Dave Bentrud.

"Occasionally I get asked the question: 'Really chief, why are we spending these kinds of resources on what is a consensual kind of situation?' And the reality is that it's not," Bentrud said.

"In nine months of operation, we've identified 35 new victims of sex trafficking, four of which were juvenile. A high percentage of them are being trafficked by somebody. In other words, somebody is profiting from their activity," he continued. "And we've arrested 14 traffickers in nine months of full-time operation. That's how many we arrested in the previous four years working part-time."

Last year was also the first full year of body camera deployment, which was successful and will continue, Bentrud said.

"It's been a great tool for us to bring evidence to court," he said.

Send news tips to Jenny Berg at [jberg@stcloudtimes.com](mailto:jberg@stcloudtimes.com) or follow her at [www.facebook.com/sctimesjenny](http://www.facebook.com/sctimesjenny) or on Twitter @bergjenny.

# Northstar

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The Northstar commuter rail line runs from Target Field to Big Lake, through Fridley, Elk River a few other stops. St. Cloud passengers must transfer to a bus, the Northstar Link, in Big Lake.

Wolgammott's Northstar bill is not the only bill on Friday's agenda. The Transportation Finance and Policy Division has a field hearing at St. Cloud City Hall.

O'Driscoll expects good turnout Friday.

He has two bills on the schedule, one allocates \$20 million over two years to help small cities pay for road projects, according to the bill. The other directs \$100 million in bond proceeds to road and bridge projects.

The committee will take public testimony from groups and individuals at Friday's noon hearing.

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The North Star Link bus line was supposed to be a pilot project to build ridership for an eventual extension of the Northstar rail service to St. Cloud.

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## Attend the hearing

**When:** 12 to 3 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22.

**Where:** St. Cloud City Hall, 400 Second St. S, St. Cloud.

**What:** House Transportation Finance and Policy Division official field hearing.

**Register to testify:** Contact John Howe at [John.Howe@house.mn](mailto:John.Howe@house.mn).

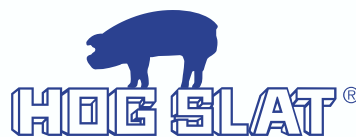
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