

Northeaster

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River bed laid bare



On October 5, the US Army Corps of Engineers began lowering the Mississippi River's water level immediately below St. Anthony Falls to allow for inspection of infrastructure normally underwater. The last drawdown occurred in 2008. Brandon Armstrong, 28, from Minnetonka, said, "I'm here cleaning up all this trash. I originally came out just to see the river but when I saw all of the trash I thought I'd try to organize some people together to help clean up." (Photos by Mike Madison) More on page 9.

Bottineau opposes superblock

by Mark Peterson

The bimonthly meeting of the City Planning Commission had a contentious virtual finale on Oct. 5 with CPED's recommendations to move forward with rezoning and conditional-use permits for a large residential project at 2301 California Street.

A row of concrete grain silos was cleared from the site two years ago, and local developer LS Black Development has proposed a six-story, 164-unit building, which would face California Street and 23rd Ave NE. The site is currently zoned I1 (Light Industrial) and they are seeking an Industrial Living Overlay to allow residential on the site. Six single-family homes sit between the north end of the site and Lowry Ave.

The proposal ran into stiff opposition by area residents and the

artistic community, some calling it a "superblock" because of its size and the visual effect it would have on the street. Others are concerned about density, parking and access to transportation. During the online meeting, callers brought up these issues and others.

Results of a BNA survey showed 70% of responders opposed rezoning, and 68% percent opposed the project itself.

In a Sept. 30 letter to the Commission, Bottineau Neighborhood Association (BNA) board member Mitch Kall listed some objections to the project. They included zoning issues, parking, the proximity of the residents' entrance to the adjacent California Building's working entrance (loading dock, truck deliveries, etc.), and the proposed building's six-story height,

scale and massing.

Kall suggested the project belongs on a commercial corridor, which California Street is not (it's not even a through street). Also, the Minneapolis 2040 Plan shows preferred future land use at that spot as "Production Mixed Use." Kall wrote, "The proposed project is first and foremost a residential project, that is offering only 5% of the built project (roughly 13,400 sq. ft.) as production space." He concluded, "This type of building does not fit the neighborhood at all including the overall height and size. It doesn't fit our history/culture, it has zero natural amenities, it does not create a high-quality physical environment, and will not create a healthy, sustainable, and diverse economy in our neighborhood."

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A view of the proposed building which shows some variation in the massing and stepping back from the street. It is still, however, one huge building. ESG is the architect on the LS Black Development project.

Kids are coping better than adults?

The challenge of hybrid learning

by Marla Khan-Schwartz

COVID-19 has affected everyone, especially schools. While Minneapolis Public Schools opted to begin the school year with distance learning, others have adopted a hybrid model. They used Gov. Tim Walz's Safe Learning Model as their guide. Three local schools shared their experiences about the partial re-opening of their facilities.

Yinghua Academy, 1616 Buchanan Ave NE, decided to implement a full hybrid program so students could attend in-person several days per week in split groups, while also keeping the full distance learning option available. The process to re-open was not easy, according to the administrative staff who helped plan, because of the need to make modifications so the school was safe.

Using Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding, which contains two major funding sources for schools, Yinghua made accommodations by adding plexiglass to office spaces and kindergarten classrooms, placing social distance markers in the hallways, providing masks and face shields for teachers, providing additional cleaning equipment, and

modifications to their health office. They also used funding to hire new staff who help oversee children during the school day.

Although these accommodations seem like they could change the perspective and attitude of students, Executive Director Sue Berg said students are attending with a positive attitude.

"I think the most outstanding revelation is that the kids are the most amazing," said Berg. "No one has fussed about a mask, about social distancing, the desks apart, or eating in the classroom. With these changes that had to take place, the teachers have been extremely flexible and committed to learning. We took one step at a time because it is so new and unknown, that we have to modify as we go."

In the Columbia Heights Public School district, the decision was made for students to return to a phase two, modified hybrid model.

"Phase two is a modified hybrid where the majority of students are learning from home," said Tara Thukla, director of teaching and learning for Columbia Heights Public Schools. "We have the ability to bring in small groups of students

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