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## A NEW DALE STREET BRIDGE

*Bridge transformed from something small and dirty into a useful and inspiring structure*

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

In her dream, a young girl was walking down Dale Street with her mother, who pushed a stroller. She was reading a poem on the sidewalk.

"Look, mama, you can read it both ways," the girl said.

When Midway artist Hawona Sullivan Janzen woke up she knew the task ahead of her. She wrote a poem for the new Dale Street bridge that can be read from both directions. The meaning changes as you read the words from the north or from the south.

It's one of the little surprises that rewards those who travel on the Dale Street bridge every day, according to Rondo artist Mica Lee Anders, who collaborated with Sullivan Janzen and G.E. Patterson on the artistic pieces that set the bridge apart.

The words of the poem came from what people wrote down when asked about their vision of the community.

NEW DALE STREET BRIDGE >> 11



Ruby Anders follows the red and white oak leaves to do the Lindy Hop dance on Wednesday, Aug. 10, 2021 – one of the little surprises that reward those who travel on the Dale Street bridge every day. Looking on are Dale Street bridge artists (left to right) G.E. Patterson, Mica Anders, and Hawona Sullivan Janzen. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

## Property taxes going up in 2022

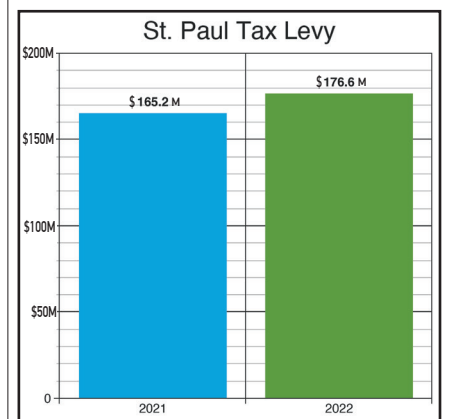
By JANE McCLURE

Pieces of the 2022 property tax levy and local government budgets are falling into place. St. Paul and Ramsey County have announced maximum levies and 2022 budgets; the St. Paul School Board is poised to unveil its levy in September.

Both city and county budgets focus on restoring services cut during the COVID-19 pandemic, and use of federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Few new programs are in the works, although the city is creating an Office of Neighborhood Safety. The Hamline-Midway Branch Library is funded for either renovation and expansion or replacement.

The city levy increase is 6.9 percent; the county is at 1.5 percent.

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## Central High School's principal focuses on closing opportunity gap

*Christine Vang is first Hmong-American in this role*

By MARGIE O'LOUGHLIN

In the summer of 2020, Christine Vang was selected as the new principal of Central High School – the first Hmong-American ever to fill that position.

What ensued was a year like no other, with school on hold for months during the lock down, followed by online learning and a partial return to in-person learning with the hybrid model.

She said, "After so many months of disruption, we've all gotten un-used to the traditional experience of high school. There are usually rituals and routines, schedules and expectations. We know that our students want to be here. They are eager to come

back into the building to see their friends and their teachers, and to return to the more traditional experience of high school."

### Strong equity vision

Vang has deep roots in the St. Paul Public Schools. She graduated from Como Park Senior High School, and went on to earn her bachelor's degree and elementary school teaching license from Concordia College.

She earned her master's degree in education, an administrative license, and a superintendent license at St. Mary's University and Mankato State University. Prior to becoming principal at Central, Vang was a teacher, assistant principal, and principal in the St. Paul Public School District for 25 years.

She said, "I feel very fortunate to be part of the Central High School community. It was the right time for me to transi-

tion to this school. I make it a top priority to build strong relationships with staff, students, families and the community, so that we can close the achievement and opportunity gap for all our students. It is because of this priority that I felt the calling to work at Central – it was something I simply could not ignore.

"The pandemic has made this a very difficult social-emotional time for young people. The challenge of providing excellence in education right now is really raising the demands of principal leadership."

### Collaboration is key

There are eight counselors and four social workers employed at Central High School. Vang said, "Their role, like all of us who work here, is to wear many hats in supporting our students. They provide academic support, but they also provide

a great deal of social-emotional support. Now, more than ever, we will all be collaborating in our goal of being present for Central's students."

The pandemic has impacted teaching and learning in significant ways. Vang said, "We have worked extra hard to understand how to fill in the gaps. How can we help students make up lost credits? We offered extended day credit-recovery programs last year. We'll be working with our district to provide those same opportunities this year, under the extended day program. There will be online opportunities for credit recovery, too."

Central High School has experienced a number of serious incidents of student violence since 2015. The school district issued a mandate this summer to eliminate SROs (School Resource Officers) in the schools, as some

CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL'S >> 8



"I'm a mother of five grown children. At the heart of my job is taking care of our children. When I step into my role as a principal, I am very aware that each of these students is someone's child," said Central High School principal Christine Vang. (Photo submitted)



AGING WELL  
Andy Dodds keeps coming back to help others

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REBUILD REPAIR RECYCLE  
Treaties not tar sands - protestors in St. Paul

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KNOW BEFORE YOU VOTE  
Get to know the candidates in the mayoral race

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**Story told in art**

- **Oak trees** - Two metal oak trees designed by G.E. Patterson recall the canopy of oak trees that once lined the neighborhood. One branch is broken but still hanging on.
- **Rondo Map** - the abutment walls visible from I94 feature a Rondo map pattern.
- **'I Am Rondo' parapet wall** - Text in 11 languages represents the neighborhood's various ethnic communities, as well as the original Dakota name for the land, visible as you travel over the bridge. The text also includes 'I am Ron-deau' to reference the French Canadian explorer the neighborhood is named after.
- **Lindy Hop leaves** - Oak leaves etched into the sidewalk on either end can be followed to do the Lindy Hop dance. Place your right foot on the red oak leaves and left foot on the white oak leaves.
- **Poem** - A poem etched in the sidewalk can be read from either direction. It is composed of statements people said about their neighborhood during the public engagement gatherings held at the start of the project.
- **Rondo homes** - Imprints represent homes destroyed during construction of I94 in the 1960s and puts them back on Dale Street.

# A NEW DALE STREET BRIDGE



Artists, community residents and leaders celebrate the opening of the new Dale Street Bridge on Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021, and mark how it showed a new way to approach infrastructure projects. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

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**A legacy project**

Sullivan Janzen remembers trying to cross the Dale Street bridge with a baby in a stroller to get to the library. It felt so dangerous, she didn't do it again. That child, her son Nicholas, died in 2012, and this new bridge feels like part of his legacy, she said. The \$14.7 million project from University to Concordia included wider sidewalks and boulevards, sidewalk barriers, cross-walk bumpouts, improved lighting, and reconfigured through lanes and left turn lanes. It also tells the stories of her ancestors who moved from the south to the north - and those

who have since moved back to the south feeling discontented with the northern experience, according to Sullivan Janzen. It is part of the legacy of Rondo, a neighborhood split by the construction of Interstate 94 in the 1960s. The land, too, has its own story. "The poem in my mind was written from the perspective of the land," said Sullivan Janzen. **Welcome** Welcome to St. Paul. Here is Rondo. The three artists who developed the artwork on the new Dale Street bridge wanted to let people know this is not just a place to drive through, explained Anders during a walking tour of

the project area on Aug. 11, 2021. It starts with the big block lettering on the side of the new bridge visible from Interstate 94 that clearly labels this as Dale Street. Anders thanked the engineers who embraced what they saw and made it real. "This is who we are. Rondo is still here. Rondo is still happening," said Anders. Her 11-year-old daughter, Ruby, stated, "I think it's really cool how they turned something really small and a little bit dirty into this beautiful We Are Rondo bridge." Two metal oak trees designed by Patterson stand at each entrance ramp. On each, there is one broken branch that is still hanging on.

"The freeway bent us, but did not break us," said Sullivan Janzen. **A beacon** Green acrylic panels of acorns that look like stain glass are set in the bridge railings along with a yellow panel that says 'We are Rondo.' At the top of each acorn sits the West African Sankofa symbol. "We look back to see where we're going," explained Anders. "The old bridge you just drove across. You didn't pay attention to it. It was just a bridge," observed Taffy Jones, who has lived one block away from the Dale Street bridge for 40 years. The new bridge is a beacon. "When I'm driving, I know I'm coming home." She added, "Even if you don't see Dale Street, you can see the acorns. It's phenomenal." Taffy is a cousin to artists Seitu Jones and Mica Lee Anders, and gave feedback on the artwork along the way. Their grandparents' house at 914 Fuller Ave. is one of the Rondo homes imprinted on the side of the new bridge. It's still standing, but others shown there were destroyed during the construction of Interstate 94. "We put them back on Dale Street," said Anders. A map of Rondo lines the abutment walls on the sides of the bridge, visible when traveling on the interstate. "The scar of the highway went right through the middle of Rondo. We took the scar and make it a more beautiful symbol," explained Anders. "It's like a river running through the community." The 11 languages spoken in Rondo are engraved in the parapet wall, along with the original Dakota name for the land. Scattered on the sidewalk are oak leaves in the pattern of Lindy Hop dance steps. It's fun to follow, and is also a symbol of

DALE STREET BRIDGE >> 13

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Rondo residents (left to right) Taffy Jones, cousin Ruby Anders, and mother Jewell Jones stand by the replica of their grandparent's house on the side of the new Dale Street bridge. >> More photos online at [www.MonitorSaintPaul.com](http://www.MonitorSaintPaul.com).



Special touches abound on the new Dale Street bridge, including a poem etched into the sidewalk by Hawana Sullivan Janzen. On the railing are green acorns visible from afar and the words "We are Rondo." (Photo by Tessa M. Christensen)

DALE STREET BRIDGE >> From 12

youth following in the "steps of the ancestors," pointed out Anders. "The dance moves and history will flow right through them."

**More accessible**

Sullivan Janzen's dad, who is in a wheelchair, can now get up and across the bridge easier. The grade of the roadway has made it difficult for those in wheelchairs, who have trouble walking, or those pushing strollers. A switchback was added on the northeast side where an old Valvoline gas station once sat to improve access with a gentler slope.

The landscaping around the switchback remains to be done, and will likely include something to honor the artists.

"It's a special honor to work here in Rondo," observed artist Seitu Jones, who lives in the neighborhood as do many of his relatives. He mentored Anders, Sullivan Janzen and Patterson on this project through a partnership with Springboard for the Arts. "I'm happy to work with other artists to build their capacity."

**Different approach for an infrastructure project**

The work on this bridge showed how to approach infrastructure in a different way, S. Jones pointed out. "Infrastructure does not need to be just utilitarian," he said. "It can also be inspiring and informing."

"We can be proud of this bridge because it is one that we all got our hands in to design," stated Mayor Melvin Carter, whose family is connected to the Rondo neighborhood. "Congratulations on our new bridge."

This project marked a new way of engaging with the community. For the three artists working on the project, the job wasn't just to create art. It was to connect with community members about the project.

Sullivan Janzen created black aprons with white lettering to let folks identify them as a Dale Bridge Artist. With many domestic workers throughout generations of her family, Sullivan Janzen wanted to recast how an apron is viewed. "I wanted to change the ideas in people's minds that art is not work," she

explained.

The artists showed up in their aprons at community events, like Rondo Days and the opening of the Rondo Commemorative Plaza. When they gathered in the community room at the library, they brought food. They paired flyers with pastries, and partnered with Hallie Q Brown's groups for elders as they worked to connect with people on the whole life cycle. They attended multiple National Night Out gatherings, arriving with an ice cream truck owned by a BIPOC family to reward those who shared their input on chalkboards and via Polaroid cameras with a sweet treat.

"We really wanted people to feel involved," explained Sullivan Janzen. The work was paid through a grant from Blue Cross/Blue Shield that the Summit-University Planning Council received.

They asked people during that 18-month engagement period, "What do you do on Dale Street?" They heard: Go to my grandma's house. Go to the library. Go to church. They asked what people

wanted their landscape to look like, and it helped them figure out what some of the elements were that stayed visible in people's minds and were important to include in the bridge project. They told people to go to the site after the work was done and let them know if they got it right.

"It was a big responsibility," stated Sullivan Janzen

After listening to people's concerns about the construction project, they decided to do it in two halves so that there was always a way for people to get across during the construction in 2020 and 2021. Because of the pandemic, not as many people were driving to work and school, so "we were able to work faster," observed Anders.

**Not them versus us**

"As you can tell from people's comments and responses, the bridge spans more than just a physical space," said Anders' mother, Mary Anders Morris.

"I think it shows that the community and government can work together," observed T. Jones. "It's not them versus us all the time."

**SIDEWALK POETRY**

by Hawona Sullivan Janzen

now we are rondo  
before we were acorns  
we were oaks  
we were here  
and then you came  
and then them  
and then them again  
and then them again  
then we  
and you  
and them become us now  
we are all  
rondo

\* This poem is etched into the sidewalk on the new Dale Street bridge. The meaning changes depending on which side you start reading.

**Features of the bridge**

- Sidewalk barriers between the sidewalks and traffic lanes improve safety.
- Wider sidewalks and boulevards make for better walkability.
- ADA-compliant switchback on the northeast corner improves access.
- Retaining wall at Dale St. and Concordia improve the function of the ball fields.
- Crosswalk bumpouts at several intersections shorten the crossing distance.
- Improved lighting
- New left-turn lane to east-bound I94
- Landscaping add greenery to beautify the area

**What is the Right Thing to do?**

"...sometimes doing what's right feels wrong..." ~Stephen Colbert

"Your attitude will shape the eventual outcome of all transitions." ~ Dr. Darlene Fry

**Hello Monitor readers,**  
Happy September as we enter that magical time of the year of transitioning from green and bright summer days to colorful and shorter fall days. The wide-world of sports crosses paths and competes with new and returning tv series and, of course, a new school year begins. This year's seasonal transition also brings sobering and reflective memories, milestones, and hopes for better days and collective courage and empathy to Do the Right Thing!  
So, what is the Right Thing to Do, particularly, in light of 9/11, ending a 20-year war, the devastating Hurricane Ida, the re-assault of COVID, the fear to talk about and/or act on institutional/structural racism, and with men continuing to mandate laws for women?

We each have our own sense of the Right Thing, which we have learned from our parents, siblings, friends, schools, faith-based institutions, Hollywood, independent and social media outlets, and our country and community leaders and men-

tors and other influencers. For instance, my family was taught and raised to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. This teaching and learning also came with the acknowledgment of challenges and difficulties; however, insights and wisdom was also shared, in order to Do the Right Thing!

What were you taught - do you remember?

Are you still being taught and what are you teaching or passing on?

**ComMUSICation moves to Frogtown**

This month I asked an organization that recently located in Frogtown for an introduction/press release of who they are. Although I'm familiar with them, I want you to know about this excellent resource and asset for the Midway and beyond communities.

ComMUSICation is excited to announce our 2021-22 school year programs. Starting on Sept. 21, we will offer our flagship program Performance Choir for youth in grades fourth through ninth on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 4 to 5:30 p.m. and our Crescendo program for youth in grades first through third on Thursdays from 3 to 3:45 p.m. Programs will take

**Peace bubbles**

By MELVIN GILES  
[peacebubbles@q.com](mailto:peacebubbles@q.com)

place in person at our new location, St. Paul Fellowship Church in Frogtown. Youth will have the ability to attend programs virtually as well. Register at [cmcmn.org/register](http://cmcmn.org/register).

ComMUSICation Executive Director Georgina Chinchilla Gonzalez shared: "We are excited to have found a great space to rebuild and grow our after-school programs in the Frogtown neighborhood, which we were founded to serve eight years ago. Our focus continues to be offering accessible, high-quality music programs to young people in this next stage of our work."

ComMUSICation's (CMC) mission is to amplify young people's voices and cultivate skills for success through equitable access to music, collaboration, and opportunity. Founded in 2013, ComMUSICation teaches skills for success through music-making to youth from Saint Paul's Frogtown, East Side and North End neighborhoods. Our high-quality and intensive music

programs are built on the belief that every young person, regardless of background, deserves the opportunity to be in a safe and caring environment where they are free to express themselves, can define their future, and change the world.

Georgina Chinchilla Gonzalez, 868 Sherburne Ave., St. Paul, MN 55104. Phone: 612-360-1502, email [director@commusicationmn.org](mailto:director@commusicationmn.org).

**Renewing the Countryside**

I also asked my new work colleagues to share a little something about what our team of three does; thank you, Nora and Ramona for sharing the following information:

*Fall is upon us, and with that comes back to school and lots of reading. Did you know September is Black Reading Month? Seems like a great opportunity to read some great books by Black authors. One favorite through our work with both the Urban Farm and Garden Alliance (UFGA) and Renewing the Countryside (RTC) is Jayden's "Impossible Garden" by Melina Mangal.*

*Our work with Renewing the Countryside primarily focuses on supporting early care providers in implementing farm to early care, which consists of three main areas: purchasing local food, gardening, and nutrition education. Renewing the Countryside has a mission of connecting local farmers with local eaters, to promote sustainability and shared understanding. We have re-*

*cently teamed up with local farmers from the Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA), to provide weekly CSA boxes to local childcare providers, which has allowed young children an opportunity to taste local vegetables and learn about how and where those vegetables were grown. To learn more about HAFA or CSAs, you can find details here: <https://www.hmongfarmers.com/csa/>.*

*Come by and say hello if you see us around at one of the St. Paul community gardens sharing time with neighborhood youth and families or at local events sharing information about how to involve children, youth and families in learning about growing and eating farm/garden fresh fruits and veggies.*

*Also, next month, October is Farm to School Month, a chance to celebrate local farmers, support purchasing local food in schools and communities, and crunch a local apple if you can! More details available here: [z.umn.edu/f2smoonth](http://z.umn.edu/f2smoonth). Join us in crunching an apple in October, or learn more about the organization and find resources on our website: [www.renewingthecountryside.org/f2ece](http://www.renewingthecountryside.org/f2ece)*

*Keep the positive vibrations flowing and stay optimistic!!!!  
May Peace Be In the Rondo, Frogtown, Hamline/Midway, Como, & Surrounding Communities...  
May Peace Be In Our Homes & Communities...  
May Peace Prevail On Earth (MPPE)!!!!  
BE SMART! DO YOUR PART!  
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