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STPPP 10-04-99

Problems move with residents

■ City's empty homes not all crime-ridden

CHARLES LASZEWSKI STAFF WRITER

Vacant properties such as the house where an 8-year-old St. Paul girl was raped last month are often perceived as blights on their neighborhoods and magnets for criminal activity. But a Pioneer Press analysis of more than a dozen chronic problem properties in the city suggests that's not usually the case.

In fact, housing code complaints and police calls to those properties often drop dramatically once their occupants move out.

The house at 940 Sherburne Ave., where the girl was allegedly sexually assaulted by her brother and several other children ranging

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EMPTY

▼ CONTINUED FROM 1A

in age from 6 to 13, appears to follow that pattern, records show.

While at least one neighbor told the Pioneer Press that he had complained to the city for two months about children going into the house, other neighbors say they noticed no suspicious activities there.

"This wasn't one that slipped through our fingers," said Mort Bostrom, program manager for the city's code enforcement division. "There were not people calling us saying kids are running in and out. I don't recall that we were ever called back by the neighbors because of an open nuisance. I'm very comfortable with the way we monitored it."

The city's inspection records appear to support Bostrom's claim.

Inspectors visited the house in 1995 and ordered its crumbling garage repaired or razed, inspection records show. Over the following three years, the file shows several orders to shovel the sidewalks, mow the grass and pick up trash in the back yard. Finally, electrical service was cut off by the utility company. The owner then abandoned the property and the city added it to its list of vacant properties in October 1998.

The city's vacant building inspector checked the house 20 times in the last year, walking around the house, making sure that the locks on doors and windows were secure, Bostrom said. Nearly a month before the rape, a check of the building showed the house was secure, Bostrom said.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, which held the mortgage for the property, took over the house in February, and its files also indicate there have been few problems in recent months.

HUD spokeswoman Sandi Abadinsky said a real estate management company hired by the agency also checked the property every two weeks. Twice this summer, break-ins were discovered and the damage was repaired.

Police calls to the property also declined after it became vacant.

From September 1997 until it was condemned last year, there were 18 calls ranging from disorderly conduct to domestic disputes. But since the house was abandoned, records show just three police calls to the address.

The other 12 properties the Pioneer Press examined followed a similar pattern as 940 Sherburne, with two notable exceptions.

Before they became vacant, all those properties were the subject of numerous inspections by the city's code enforcement staff and each had amassed between 10 and 57 police calls. But when the occupants left, it appears most of the problems at those properties went with them.

Once vacated, most of the properties had no more than three police calls, and only two had more than five complaints, records show.

The two exceptions were 462 Edmund Ave., which had 25 calls, and 964 Dayton Ave., with 31 calls.

Julie Kloeppe, who lives not far from the two-story house at 462 Edmund, said nothing has improved since it was registered as a vacant building in early June. Men continue to sit on the front porch

and sell drugs, she said, and scatter just before police arrive.

Dawn Goldschmitz, executive director of the Greater Frogtown Community Development Corp., said some houses sit empty for a couple of years without incident because the owner keeps the lawn mowed and walks shoveled and neighbors keep an eye out for any suspicious activity.

Others, however, look bad before and after they go vacant.

The key, Goldschmitz said, is what kinds of activities were taking place at the properties before they were vacated.

"We know of ones where (drug dealers) get evicted and they still

break in or hang around there because that is where their business is," Goldschmitz said.

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Attention Kmart Shoppers

In the Kmart 2-day (October 1 and 2, 1999) Stock-Up Sale circular, on page 7, all items on this page indicated to be on sale thru 10/9/99 should have stated "On Sale 2 Days Only, Oct. 1 and 2".

We regret any inconvenience this error may have caused our customer.



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Our perspective

Affordable housing

Judge Rosenbaum's sound decision

Despite the pressing need for affordable housing, U.S. District Court Judge James Rosenbaum was right to reject the NAACP's effort to prevent demolition of two public housing projects in north Minneapolis. Surely this was a painful decision, given the predicament facing some of the city's poorest families. But Rosenbaum's order struck at the heart of the raging dispute between housing activists and City Hall.

He described precisely the paradox that housing activists have created. In 1992 they launched a laudable and successful court battle to break up the poverty and racial segregation that isolated the near North Side from the rest of the city. The suit was settled in 1995 with a consent decree directing the dispersal of public housing throughout the metro area and the redevelopment of the near North Side as a mixed-income neighborhood.

But now, just as redevelopment begins, some of these same activists throw themselves before the bulldozers, trying to prevent what they originally sought. Some even complain of gentrification and "ethnic cleansing," apparently hoping to return to the bad old days of concentrated poverty and racial segregation.

Wisely, Rosenbaum would have none of it. His order concluded: "The NAACP's 'solution' would undermine, and ultimately eviscerate the central purpose of the consent decree. Even if the court had the authority, or was given an arguable justification for imposing such a modification, it would decline — indeed, it would be compelled to decline — to do so."

The activists, of course, don't really want the bad old days. Their hope is that, with enough government help, a poor, racially cohesive near North Side might rise to prosperity collectively with its sense of "identity" and "community" intact.

This might appeal to some, but it's a well-worn recipe for failure. For 30

The hard work of convincing the middle class to welcome poorer people into their neighborhoods must proceed. Meanwhile, cities and suburbs must crank up their efforts to supply affordable homes. And middle-class residents must be drawn back to mixed-income city neighborhoods.

years, poverty programs (including housing) have emphasized helping poor blacks by leaving them isolated. It hasn't worked. The "Robert Taylor Homes model" isn't worth another try. If anything, recent demographic trends are more disturbing than ever: suburbs becoming wealthier and more racially diverse; inner cities becoming poorer and even more segregated.

The celebrated sociologist William Julius Wilson has well documented the social pathologies that tend to fester when "concentrations of poverty" persist. Other scholars, especially the noted urbanist David Rusk, have described the perils of relying on community agencies to lift people out of poverty "where they are." He advocates instead a regional approach.

So do we. The hard work of convincing the middle class to welcome poorer people into their neighborhoods must proceed. Meanwhile, cities and suburbs must crank up their efforts to supply affordable homes. And middle-class residents must be drawn back to mixed-income city neighborhoods. These were worthy goals when the consent decree was signed in 1995. They remain so today.

MINNEAPOLIS

Judge approves demolition of low-income housing

NAACP had hoped to use 300 units as temporary shelters

AMY MAYRON STAFF WRITER

Minneapolis will demolish 300 low-income housing units after a federal judge on Thursday denied a motion by the NAACP that the city preserve the apartments and turn them into temporary housing.

"I think this has been a very difficult situation for everybody," said City Council President Jackie Cherryhomes. "We hoped for a settlement, but the NAACP wasn't interested."

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has been battling the city over the Glenwood-Lyndale projects, which

were scheduled for demolition in August. The units are to be replaced with mixed-income housing as part of a 1995 court settlement to spread affordable housing throughout Hennepin County and ensure a racial mix of tenants.

More than 700 units along Olson Memorial Highway were at issue in the class-action lawsuit, which named Lucy Hollman as defendant.

The 300 units at Glenwood-Lyndale are the only remaining projects. Earlier this summer, the NAACP and community leaders tried to stop demolition, saying the apartments could temporarily house the homeless. The units already had been stripped of appliances in preparation for demolition, so the NAACP also asked for financing to make the units habitable.

The judge denied the NAACP requests citing terms of the agree-

"I think this has been a very difficult situation for everybody."

JACKIE CHERRYHOMES
MINNEAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL
PRESIDENT

ment, which do not allow for changes unless all parties agree in writing. The city had offered to spare 70 units and spend \$300,000 to rehab them. The NAACP rejected the offer and asked for more.

"It is clear that stopping demolition will likely jeopardize this entire complex redevelopment program," U.S. District Judge James Rosenbaum wrote in his decision, handed down in Minneapolis Thursday afternoon. "No reason for delay of the demolition exists."

After the order was released,

the NAACP promised to keep an eye on the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority to ensure that the 1995 agreement is being met.

"The NAACP is proud and humbled by the court's decision," said Minneapolis chapter president Rickie Campbell. "Although the NAACP disagrees with the outcome, the NAACP will abide by the court's decision."

City officials said they would move forward with demolition as soon as possible. Old construction permits have expired, so the city may have to start from scratch.

Rosenbaum expressed some concern about the rate at which replacement housing is being provided. The city has secured eight units in the suburbs and 48 in the city since demolition started, said Cora McCorvey, with the housing authority.

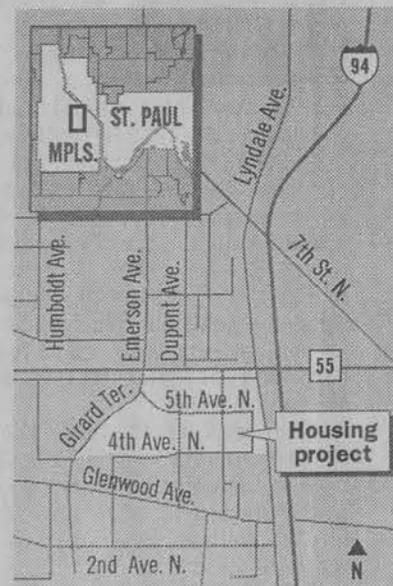
The city has expedited the schedule for replacement housing

"Although the NAACP disagrees with the outcome, the NAACP will abide by the court's decision."

RICKIE CAMPBELL
MINNEAPOLIS NAACP CHAPTER
PRESIDENT

and expects to have an additional 80 or so units available by April, she said.

"We've worked hard on this and accomplished a lot," McCorvey said. "We have acted in good faith every step of the way. We're just anxious to move forward."



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Company as entity basically unaffected by baseball debate

As a Minnesota-based multinational company with the bulk of its business coming from other parts of the United States and the world, and with 90 percent of its employees living outside the state, H.B. Fuller Co. doesn't register a new baseball stadium on the corporate radar as a key issue.



LARS CARLSON
 GUEST COLUMNIST

Like most, if not all, Minnesota companies, we are far more concerned about tax policies and governmental attitudes toward business issues, such as education, communication, transportation, regulation and trade.



Minnesota Public Radio and the Pioneer Press are sponsoring a public forum on stadium questions from 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 11 at the Fitzgerald Theater, 10 E. Exchange St., St. Paul. Free tickets are available at the Fitzgerald box office and in the lobby of the Pioneer Press, 345 Cedar St., St. Paul.

Further, we find that our employees are most interested in personal tax policies and issues of housing and healthy neighborhoods, crime prevention and safety, education, recreation, health services, transportation and the environment. They also are interested in other "quality of life" issues, such as arts and entertainment, including professional sports, but not critically so.

Certainly business — along with government at all levels, private citizens, foundations and nonprofit organizations — contributes greatly to the public good through its support of the community's quality of life. This support — through property, sales and corporate taxes; financial contributions; and donations of employee time and talent — works

with other parts of society to enrich the lives of citizens. And, in fact, together we in Minnesota have created much in our communities to provide available and affordable opportunities for a wide spectrum of people.

This is good, but it also raises some questions about whom, exactly, a new stadium would benefit. Aside from the debate on whether our community will benefit economically from the proposed public-private investment, we must also ask if more or fewer people will benefit personally.

Are we, in fact, broadening or narrowing the range of opportunities in our community? If the number of affordable seats available to the public is to be significantly reduced while the number of suites available at six-figure prices is to be significantly expanded, the answer is very clear.

And, if the answer is clear, do we then "as a community" want to subsidize such an effort that, in effect, offers one professional sport to fewer rather than more people?

Carlson (e-mail: lars.carlson@hbfuller.com), of Afton, is senior vice president, administration, for the H.B. Fuller Co. The views expressed here are those of the writer and not of the company.

St. Paul Urban League constituents' worries are more basic



WILLIE MAE WILSON

GUEST COLUMNIST

The St. Paul Urban League does not have a specific position on the baseball-stadium finance issue. We support the decision to place the issue on the Nov. 2 election ballot and let people vote the stadium plan up or down.

Urban League constituents have not shown much enthusiasm for participating in the current debate about using public tax dollars to finance a new stadium for the Twins. The stadium issue is important, but sits on the back burner in terms of their hierarchy of needs.

There is a crisis in St. Paul's affordable housing market and problems in some of St. Paul's public schools; many people are having to focus their time and attention on improving their children's education and on getting a decent home at an affordable price.

When people are faced with tough survival problems such as finding a good school for their children and decent housing for their families and themselves, they tend not to focus on leisure-time activities such as sports and entertainment until after their basic needs are met.

They are aware of the current stadium debate and are familiar with the argument that a stadium may stimulate economic development and create many good jobs, but they are skeptical about whether they will be able to participate in this economic boom and get some of those good new jobs.

At the same time, they are certain that their sales taxes will increase, because it is projected that the average family of four in St. Paul will have an increased tax burden of approximately \$1,777 spread over the 30 years the tax will be in place.

They need all of their dollars to pay for basic survival necessities such as housing. In my neck of the woods, some people think that a greater public good would be served by having a public debate about putting \$325 million in taxes into the development of more affordable housing units or into the schools that have been placed under academic probation. It is said that a rising tide (such as the new stadium) raises all boats, but some people's life experiences have not reflected that fact.

So most people will wait till Nov. 2 and let the voters decide.



Minnesota Public Radio and the Pioneer Press are sponsoring a public forum on stadium questions from 7 to 9 p.m. Oct. 11 at the Fitzgerald Theater, 10 E. Exchange St., St. Paul. One hour will be dedicated to the Twins stadium vote in St. Paul and the other hour to the Vikings. Free tickets are available at the Fitzgerald Theater box office and in the Pioneer Press lobby at 345 Cedar St. in St. Paul.

Willie Mae Wilson is president of the St. Paul Urban League. Contact her at (651) 224-5771.

City's ahead in public housing for suburbs

Although Minneapolis is criticized for moving too slowly to replace lost low-income units, it is succeeding in spreading them out.

By Steve Brandt
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Even as Minneapolis housing officials are being harshly criticized for demolishing far more public housing units than they're building, they appear to be making more progress than other big cities in placing those units in the suburbs.

More than four years after settling the Hollman public housing discrimination lawsuit, they've demolished 422 housing units in the

"Minneapolis is way ahead" on developing suburban public housing compared to other large metro areas.

— Tom Streitz, lawyer for the Legal Aid Society

lawsuits, angry meetings and congressional interference.

The Twin Cities suburbs have more new units than Minneapolis because that's the plan: Seeking to spread out public-housing tenants to areas with fewer minorities and poor people, the Hollman plan calls for up to 690 units outside Minneapolis, 88 inside.

In addition, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority decided to mount the suburban effort first because it thought the job would be tougher. Tougher because resistance was expected, and tougher because many suburbs lacked public housing expertise.

North Side projects. They've only created 54 new ones of a planned 770, although hundreds more are being planned or built.

Forty-six of the newly created units are in the suburbs, and eight are in Minneapolis. Some big-city housing authorities that have been sued, such as those in Dallas and Cleveland, haven't built any units in the suburbs. They've faced homeowners'

HOUSING continues on B3:

— Chart shows suburban units.

HOUSING from B1

Public housing takes money, time — whether new or rehab

Today, critics — including those who brought the lawsuit — question that strategy.

They say the housing authority could have replaced more units faster in Minneapolis, where it has legal authority and experience.

In the suburbs, by contrast, the housing authority must rely on persuasion and economic incentives.

Moreover, critics say, Minneapolis would have a better moral case with the suburbs if it built more public housing in its own neighborhoods where it now is relatively sparse.

"The numbers kind of speak for themselves," said Jodi Nelson, an organizer at the Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing who works with suburban churches to build support for affordable housing. "We have a long ways to go."

Minneapolis officials say they'll speed up acquisition of units within their borders so that all will be occupied by April. But some say higher goals must be set.

Last week, two groups challenged neighborhoods near the outer edges of the city and at least 10 suburbs to take more affordable housing, including public housing. The Coalition of Black Churches and the African American Leadership Summit called for at least 10 of Minneapolis' City Council wards to take 25 units each, and for 30 units apiece to go in Golden Valley, St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Richfield, Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Burnsville, Edina, Brooklyn Park and Minnetonka. They urged that federal Department of Housing and Urban Development funds be denied to communities that don't cooperate within a year.

'Way ahead'

But as slowly as suburban public housing has developed here — relying so far mostly on private developers responding to the lure of Hollman money — it has generally exceeded suburban public housing that has resulted from settlement of public housing lawsuits in other large metro areas.

"Minneapolis is way ahead on that," said Tom Streitz, a lawyer for the Legal Aid Society, which sued the city, its housing authority and other agencies with the Minneapolis NAACP in 1992 on behalf of public housing tenants. The settlement, reached in 1995, was designed to offset the segregation of low-income, minority public housing tenants in the city's core.

Federal lawyers with experience defending such discrimina-

After the Hollman settlement

Here is an overview of what has been accomplished so far in replacing the 422 housing units demolished at the housing projects of north Minneapolis. City officials are trying to demolish another 300 units there. City plans for replacing those units would add at least 88 in the city and up to 690 in the suburbs.

Within Minneapolis

Minneapolis total	Goal, in units	Acquired so far
	88	38
By planning district:		
Camden	11	11
Northeast	18	5
Calhoun Isles	8	0
Powderhorn	9	5
Longfellow	10	3
University	0	2
Nokomis	4	2
Southwest	28	10

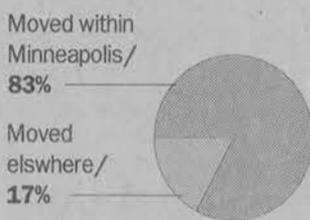
In the suburbs

	Units in development	Units occupied
Chaska	5	5
Minnetonka	0	9
Savage	0	11
Eden Prairie	0	5
Plymouth	0	6
Mounds View	0	10
New Hope	12	0
Maple Grove	5	0
Bloomington	6	0
Watertown	8	0
St. Francis	8	0
Woodbury	4	0
Ramsey	4	0
St. Louis Park	18	0

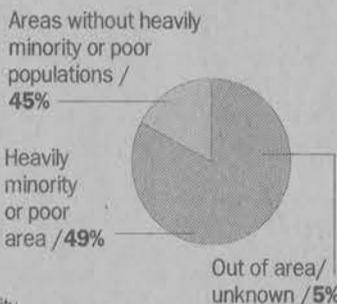
Counties planning scattered-site units**:

Washington County	60
Carver County	50
Scott County	40
Maximum suburban goal:	690
Units occupied or being developed:	276

Where relocated families went



Type of area they chose**:



Source: Minneapolis Public Housing Authority

*Some figures maybe rounded

**Individual single-family homes and duplexes not located in housing projects.

tion lawsuits say that, rather than develop public housing in the suburbs, other big-city public housing authorities have used rental subsidies in privately owned housing, a tactic less likely to become known to suburban neighbors.

Some 900 rental subsidies were made available under the Hollman settlement. But the rental vacancy rate in the Twin Cities area is now an extremely tight 1.5 percent, half of what it was when the settlement was forged. That means many of those subsidies go unused because tenants can't find open units with landlords who participate in the rental-subsidy program known as Section 8. The lawsuit parties have tentatively agreed to reroute some of the

money accordingly.

Rehab or build

Creating new public housing units can take years. There are two main approaches. One is to buy existing single-family, duplex or apartment buildings and rehab them, moving in public housing tenants. Another is to build units in new housing complexes, which takes longer because it involves local regulatory approvals and often requires blending multiple sources of money to incorporate market-rate, subsidized and public housing.

Almost 100 Hollman housing units have been occupied or are in the pipeline in 15 suburban developments that have typically used such blended funding. Developers initiate such projects,

competing at the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency for tax credits and other subsidies. They are required to get local-government acceptance of those units in order to get Hollman money. Proposing those units gives them bonus points that improve their chances for other subsidies at the state level, with Hollman units carrying up-front cash of about \$93,000 per unit.

The housing authorities in Washington, Carver and Scott counties have agreed to develop 160 Hollman units, mostly on various sites rather than concentrated in housing projects. St. Louis Park is the only suburb in Hennepin County to have initiated its own proposal for Hollman units, negotiating for 18 units in two mixed-income housing complexes.

After a slow start, the Metropolitan Council has agreed to the administrative task of holding federal contracts that subsidize public housing units, assisting cities without that capacity.

"We're on the right track. Pace is a serious issue," said Tom McElveen, the region's top housing official.

Hennepin County, historically reluctant to own, operate or develop housing, is expected to decide in the next month what role it will play. Options include donating, or selling cheaply, tax-forfeited or surplus land to reduce the cost of producing new housing units, and offering incentives with federal housing money.

"Hennepin County is the big question at this point," organizer Nelson said.

But although more Hollman units have been opened outside Minneapolis than within the city, Hollman refugees have mostly stayed in the city. The heavily minority public housing population chose poorer neighborhoods with higher proportions of minority residents more often than other parts of the city.

In Minneapolis, the search for replacement units didn't start in earnest until last spring, after City Council elections. Thirty-eight units have been purchased, with 50 more to go. That doesn't count another 10 planned in the proposed Urban Village mixed-income development in Uptown.

Except for about 100 public housing units that are to be built as part of a planned mixed-income redevelopment at the North Side projects, the Hollman settlement requires all Minneapolis replacement units to be built outside portions of the city with concentrations of low-income or minority residents.

The job of finding scattered-site units is expected to be hardest in the Calhoun-Isles area, where housing prices are highest. There also are pockets of resistance, such as Longfellow, where concerned citizens met with housing authority representatives to express concerns with issues such as upkeep and behavior at nearby public housing units and at Section 8 houses run by private landlords.

Don't excuse city's weak action on housing

STRIB 9-27-99

Reasonable minds can disagree about policy decisions, but I found your Sept. 10 editorial on affordable housing and the related Minneapolis City Council vote disappointingly inaccurate and superficial.

The City Council will not "nearly double its spending commitment on affordable housing"; it will be making a small increase in money already allocated to such programs. Further, the 20 percent set aside for low-income rental units does not apply to all new rental units. It applies only to those projects that both receive city money and include 10 or more units. While these are laudable actions, neither is likely to make a significant impact on the severe lack of affordable housing.

It is ironic that you quoted Council Member Barret Lane regarding the vote, because he also said he did not think that the Task Force report documented the problem sufficiently, and that perhaps even the small amount of money in the resolution which passed was really not needed. The ultimate irony is that the council is getting credit for doing nothing to solve the affordable housing crisis: The accept-

Counterpoint

ed resolution will likely not lead to any increase in affordable housing units.

Like the council, the editorial pointed out the city's dire shortage of affordable housing, but then tried to explain why it was appropriate that the city passed a "do-nothing" resolution: Because Minneapolis did not solely create the large and complex affordable housing problem, the council's meager actions are acceptable. Regardless of how the problem came about and how complex and large it is, the city still has a responsibility to help its citizens.

Further, it does not seem unreasonable to expect society and government to use scarce resources to take care of children and those people least able to take care of themselves. Instead, the editorial and a majority of the council apparently believe it is more appropriate to give subsidies to people making over \$50,000 a year, as the council's plan will do.

Last time I checked, people at that income level were not visiting the shelters looking for housing.

The real reason for the council's decision seems to be, as the editorial implied, the perception that social programs targeting low-income people tend not to generate "tangible returns" or more money for the city. Unlike a majority of the council and the editorial board, a majority of citizens believe that housing people, creating family and community stability, and better educational opportunities for children are tangible returns worthy of government action.

The worst part of the editorial however, was its "blame the victim" tone and perpetuation of unfounded myths and stereotypes about people seeking affordable housing. I guess grassroots citizen involvement is only appropriate if you are meek, unquestioning and politely say thank you for whatever crumbs might be thrown your way.

— *Bill Droessler, program director, Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, Minneapolis.*

Housing is a human right

It is sadly unsurprising that the Star Tribune would choose to support the immensely weak affordable housing resolution passed last week by the Minneapolis City Council. The Star Tribune's support of the weak, almost do-nothing proposal also goes to demonstrate the rank hypocrisy of the newspaper.

This newspaper seems willing to advocate spending almost any amount of public money for a stadium (or should I say stadiums?) regardless of the fact it would be a waste of taxpayer money and the taking of money from middle and working-class citizens for the benefit of the wealthy. This newspaper, like some on the council, seems ready to roll up the carpet and lock the doors to City Hall when it comes to helping the city's most desperate citizens. Either we can afford to throw money around or we can't. It would be nice if this newspaper, along with some council members, would make up their minds and quit listening to big-buck lobbyists.

— Gary C. Bowman Jr., Minneapolis.

Your Sept. 10 editorial on affordable housing asks what the activists who marched out of the City Council meeting are looking to overcome. Many activists across the country are seeking to overcome the mentality that denies housing is a human right, and denies our government has an obligation to supply affordable housing for families with very low incomes. We also seek to overcome the racism and classism that prevent many middle-class city dwellers, officials and suburbanites from summoning "the moral courage to welcome poorer people into their neighborhoods."

I am not aware of any activists who assert that Minneapolis has caused the shortage in its entirety. Your editorial does address the role the city played in exacerbating the shortage by "tearing down hundreds of houses over the past several years." Millions of Community Development Block Grant dol-

lars that could have been used for affordable rental housing were spent to tear down these houses. In fact, 17.3 percent of the \$56.3 million in CDBG funds the city received for the past three fiscal years were used for demolition while only 5.7 percent of CDBG funds went to affordable rental housing.

The same day your editorial appeared, the New York Times ran an article describing the efforts of a coalition of religious leaders who, citing this country's moral obligation, are demanding that Congress act quickly to supply more funding for affordable housing. I am sure these leaders, as they act on the federal level, are not ignoring the responsibility of their local municipalities, just as religious leaders and other activists here who have been demanding that Minneapolis increase spending on affordable housing will also make demands to Congress.

— Ed Petsche, St. Paul; Affordable Housing Campaign member.

City turns down NAACP offer to settle

A federal judge will now rule on whether the demolition of 300 public housing units on Minneapolis' North Side will go ahead as planned.

By Steve Brandt
Star Tribune Staff Writer

City officials rejected a last-minute proposal from NAACP officials to resolve the battle over the planned demolition of public housing units in north Minneapolis on Monday, leaving the issue to a federal judge.

U.S. District Judge James Rosenbaum indicated last week that unless he was notified of a new compromise by Monday, he'd issue a ruling within days.

At issue is the fate of 300 housing units in the Lyndale and Glenwood projects, collectively known as the Hollman site. The city has been poised to demolish the housing as part of a broad redevelopment plan, but the NAACP went to court, arguing that tearing down the houses is premature because not enough replacement units have been made available.

On Monday the NAACP asked that 140 units temporarily be spared, double the 70 called for

in a tentative agreement reached Sept. 2 by the NAACP, the Legal Aid Society and the city. NAACP representatives participated in crafting that compromise, but the group's leadership rejected it.

The Minneapolis branch of the NAACP has asked Rosenbaum to block the city's plans to raze the remainder of 770 public housing units, most of them in projects that once straddled Olson Hwy. in north Minneapolis. The city and its housing authority have knocked down 422 so far to com-

ply with the settlement of a 1995 lawsuit that aimed at breaking up concentrations of poor, minority public housing tenants. But there has been intense criticism of proceeding with that policy until more replacements are created.

Monday's three-part NAACP proposal asked that the 140 units be spared so they could be reoccupied for up to two years.

HOUSING continues on B7:

— *City, NAACP officials say a settlement is still possible.*

HOUSING from B1

NAACP wants 140 units spared to allow temporary reoccupancy

That's to give a breather period in which more replacement units could be added. Only 54 new units have been built across the metro area so far under the lawsuit settlement, referred to as the Hollman settlement because the lead plaintiff's name was Lucy Hollman. The NAACP also asked that the city help find money from other sources to pay for repairs to the units.

"We've already reached a compromise," said Bill Paterson, spokesman for the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, in announcing the city's rejection of the oral proposal. A formal rejection was expected today.

City officials close to the issue said they took heart in Rosenbaum's remarks in a hearing Friday on the issue, and later in a private session with lawyers, in which he directed remarks about accepting "half a loaf" to NAACP representatives.

Those city officials also said they're incensed by an NAACP proposal made on the eve of last week's court hearing that sought \$500,000 annually. The money was to be used to finance an NAACP-nominated "African

American entity." That group's duties would include tracking Hollman residents and helping them land new housing to be developed on the site, adjust to new communities and use their relocation help to buy homes. The NAACP proposal made Monday asked that the city consider that proposal again, but city officials say they're already doing that work.

Local NAACP President Rickie Campbell said early Monday that he hoped for a compromise. He said, "If he [Rosenbaum] makes the decision, we all lose. This is an opportunity for us to build a relationship. We're in control of our own destiny. Nobody gets everything they want."

But Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton said the city was sticking to the Sept. 2 settlement offer she said was made in good faith.

The issue of preserving some of the public housing units flared on June 8, when 14 demolition opponents were arrested as they blocked bulldozers that had begun razing the Glenwood housing project.

The Sept. 2 agreement was intended to spare 70 of the 86 units



Star Tribune map by Jane Friedmann

in the adjacent Lyndale projects for one to two years, until more replacement units were created. The City Council voted Sept. 17 to spend \$300,000 to make the units habitable for that period, but the NAACP's Executive Committee voted down the deal three days later.

Campbell said the agreement didn't go far enough to address what he described as violations of the 1995 settlement.

NAACP rejects housing compromise

*Leaders will go to court
to stop razing, they say*

By Kevin Diaz
Star Tribune Staff Writer

The Minneapolis NAACP rejected a compromise settlement Monday that would have saved about a quarter of the remaining rental units in the disputed Hollman public housing site on the North Side.

Saying the tentative deal "does not go far enough," NAACP leaders said they are prepared to return to federal court Friday to block the city from demolishing any of the remaining 298 units in the Glenwood-Lyndale public housing projects.

"It's time to rumble," said Rickie Campbell, a deputy Minneapolis fire chief who recently was installed as NAACP branch president.

The unanimous vote of the NAACP Executive Committee, which had been postponed a week, followed Friday's vote by the Minneapolis City Council to approve the deal.

HOUSING from A1

Deal would have saved about 75 rental units at Hollman site

City officials expressed dismay at the NAACP's decision. "There's nothing on the table. We go to court. End of discussion," said Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton, who has been trying to work out a compromise on the demolitions since protesters blocked bulldozers in June.

Council President Jackie Cherryhomes, whose ward includes the disputed housing projects, said she was "disheartened" by the NAACP's decision. "They agreed to it in court," she said. "Well, we'll go see Judge Rosenbaum on Friday."

Under a tentative agreement worked out Sept. 2 before U.S. District Judge James Rosenbaum, lawyers for both the city and the NAACP had agreed to continue the demolition of the 220-unit Glenwood housing projects, while reusing most of the 86-unit Lyndale housing projects until

replacement housing is built.

The agreement provided \$300,000 in city funds to temporarily renovate 70 of the Lyndale units, promised a greater minority role in the redevelopment of a mixed-income community on the site, and launched the city on an accelerated replacement program for public-housing residents displaced by the demolitions.

Both sides in the expected settlement were scheduled to return before Rosenbaum at 3 p.m. Friday to complete the deal. Instead, it now looks like lawyers for each side will be making their arguments in the NAACP challenge to stop the demolition.

Campbell, who had endorsed the deal when it was announced earlier this month, said after the NAACP Executive Committee meeting Monday night at the Sabathani Community Center

that "it does not go far enough to redress the serious and numerous violations of the [Hollman] decree."

The 1995 Hollman Consent Decree, the result of an NAACP and Legal Aid housing-desegregation lawsuit, mandated the demolition of the Glenwood-Lyndale, Sumner-Olson housing projects. The Sumner-Olson projects have been torn down, but since then, the NAACP has been unhappy with the pace of creating housing units to replace the ones that have been razed.

Protests against the Glenwood demolitions on June 8 led to the arrests of 14 people, including eight ministers. Sayles Belton's compromise to temporarily renovate the Lyndale units — intended to forestall further unrest — initially was accepted by the NAACP leadership, though it has sharply divided the organization's membership in recent weeks.

Roll the dice

Sayles Belton said the unanimous rejection by the NAACP Executive Committee's indicates

a turnaround for Campbell and other organization leaders. "They'll have to explain to a judge why they changed their minds, not to me," she said.

Sayles Belton emphasized the importance of moving forward with the Hollman Decree mandate of deconcentrating low-income, minority housing projects, and replacing the former North Side projects with a new mixed-income development of parks, schools and stores.

She noted that the other parties involved in the Hollman case, including the Minneapolis Legal Aid Society, have agreed to the demolition of the mostly empty Glenwood housing projects.

But Campbell and other NAACP officials indicated that the Executive Committee's decision follows a series of recent membership meetings that have rejected the compromise agreement. "This reinforces all the membership meetings over September and August," said Ed McDonald, chairman of the branch's housing committee. "We want to save Glenwood, because that will have the largest impact."

The tentative agreement was intended to address complaints that the city has destroyed 424 housing units in all, but provided only 54 replacement units so far of 770 that are planned.

"The NAACP will pursue the important concerns raised by the community regarding the lack of affordable housing and the [city's] failure to build replacement units in a timely manner," Campbell said. Fourteen of the Executive Committee's 26 members attended Monday night's two-hour closed meeting.

Tom White, a former Legal Aid attorney representing the Minneapolis NAACP branch, said he's ready to take the organization's case to court. "It doesn't make sense to tear down housing when there's such a need for it now," he said.

Sayles Belton, however, said the NAACP is taking a big chance in going to court. "It's their decision, and I don't agree with it," she said. "I don't believe they're going to get the outcome they want. But if they want to roll the dice, it's their choice."

Communities do reap economic benefits from affordable housing

STRIB 9-24-99

In its Sept. 10 editorial on affordable housing, I was surprised to see the Star Tribune refer to housing development for low-income families as a "social service" that "generates no tangible return" for communities. Through my experience as an investment adviser, I have concluded that affordable housing generates significant economic benefits for local communities.

First, affordable housing provides homes for those who work in lower-paying jobs. Many of these workers provide vital services for Minneapolis citizens, such as education, food service and health care. Others work in the very jobs that are created by

Counterpoint

other types of city-sponsored economic development activity, such as retail sales. Unfortunately, an \$8- or \$10-per-hour job simply does not pay enough to support the rising cost of housing in the Twin Cities. Without affordable housing that is well-located in relation to new job opportunities, Minneapolis will not be able to attract and retain enough workers to overcome the labor shortage now faced by so many employers.

Second, the housing shortage hampers our schools' ability to

educate Minneapolis' children. A recent report from the Kids Mobility Project demonstrates that many Minneapolis families with young children are moving frequently in search of affordable housing, and that children who move frequently have poorer attendance and test scores than children in stable housing. I can think of no better tangible return for the city than the increase in stability and learning that children can experience if they have access to stable, affordable housing.

Third, the editorial implies that a city commitment to affordable housing would place the city directly in the home-building

business. Rather, city involvement would continue, albeit at an increased capacity, as part of a partnership that provides federal, state, local, and private funds to nonprofit and for-profit developers to produce and preserve affordable housing. There is no reason that affordable housing should be viewed differently than other city-assisted economic development activity. Like market-rate housing or any other economic development project, affordable housing production creates jobs and generates property taxes.

Finally, contrary to the stereotype of large, run-down public housing complexes, contempo-

rary affordable housing conforms to high quality standards that add to rather than detract from neighborhood revitalization. In neighborhoods throughout Minneapolis, affordable housing developments have provided new housing on vacant lots, transformed blighted buildings into high-quality homes for families, and preserved historic buildings at risk of deterioration.

On balance, your editorial did an excellent job of capturing the city's commitment to nearly double its spending on affordable housing. It also correctly laid out the challenge that "the city's significant beginning should inspire other metro communities to fi-

nally assume their share — and to demand that Congress do the same."

However, as one who spent his entire working career applying "return on investment" concepts, it is clear to me that today's investment in affordable housing will provide very tangible economic benefits to our local communities!

— Peter Heegaard, Minneapolis, founded and managed a Twin Cities-based investment advisory firm. Since retirement in 1996 he has developed and taught a curriculum on urban issues for business executives and business school students.

NAACP readies for duel over housing

The group will argue in court today to block a Minneapolis-backed demolition of the Hollman-area projects.

By Kevin Diaz
Star Tribune Staff Writer

They prayed in a north Minneapolis church basement — a small coalition of religious and civil rights leaders — and got ready for today's legal showdown between the city and the NAACP over the demolition of the Hollman-area public housing projects.

Part news conference and part sermon, Thursday's gathering at Zion Baptist Church reheated passions and hard feelings that have simmered all summer, since eight black ministers were among 14 protesters arrested while blocking bulldozers at the projects in June.

"I greatly respect what the NAACP is doing," said the Rev. Curtis Herron, pastor at Zion and one of those arrested in June. "They have arisen out of the ashes of their chaos and taken a stand for the poor and the homeless."

Herron denounced a city compromise that would have retained about 70 of the remaining 298 Hollman housing units, calling

the city's demolition bid "ignoble and self-serving."

He also endorsed Monday's decision by the executive branch of the NAACP's Minneapolis branch to reject a tentative agreement made Sept. 2 before U.S. District Judge James Rosenbaum. Returning before Rosenbaum today, lawyers for the city and the NAACP are expected to argue over an NAACP request for an injunction barring the demolition of any part of the Glenwood-Lyndale projects, which were the focus of this summer's protests.

"Gentrification is not all right in Minneapolis, and it's not all right anywhere," Herron said. "Tearing down housing in the midst of our housing crisis is a shame."

A festering debate

Four years after the city and the NAACP agreed to the Hollman Consent Decree — a landmark desegregation settlement calling for the replacement of 770 public housing units — civil rights figures and others in the black community remain deeply divided over the demolition and redevelopment of the North Side projects.

Over the years, the 73-acre project site sometimes was seen as the heart and soul of the city's black community. Now, the razing of the Glenwood-Lyndale and Sumner-Olson projects has touched raw nerves about lost

housing and lack of opportunities in one of the state's most economically depressed areas.

The NAACP's legal challenge centers on whether the city has abided by the 1995 Hollman settlement in tearing down some 424 housing units — mostly in Sumner and Olson — while replacing only 54 so far. It also questions whether the \$117 million settlement requires the demolition or the rehabilitation of the Glenwood and Lyndale projects.

Much of the anger also focuses on the eventual redevelopment of the Hollman area into a mixed-income community of parks, homes and shops. Some activists say that low-income minorities not only are being pushed out of the area, but that — contrary to specific provisions in the Hollman settlement — they also are being overlooked for redevelopment jobs and contracts.

"We want progress, but we want to participate in that progress," said Robert Woods, a member of Northside Neighbors for Justice and also of the Minneapolis NAACP branch's executive committee.

Amid negotiations with the city this summer, one NAACP demand was for a \$500,000-a-year economic development contract with "an African-American entity" selected from a pool of applicants provided by the NAACP. The demand was not included in the tentative agreement earlier

this month, but the issue was renewed Thursday in a letter from the NAACP to lawyers representing the city.

Appointment questioned

At Thursday's church meeting, Woods and others also questioned the selection this week of Kim Havey as city "empowerment zone" director overseeing some federal grants associated with the Hollman redevelopment. Havey's roommate is Council Member Lisa Goodman, and his selection drew accusations of favoritism Thursday. Havey was appointed to the post by City Coordinator Kathleen O'Brien.

Havey said he was "not knowledgeable enough" about the Hollman controversy to comment. "I want to talk to these folks and find out what the issues are," he said.

Council President Jackie Cherryhomes, who said she was "not uncomfortable" with Havey's appointment, said the Hollman settlement calls for "large-scale" participation by women and minorities in the North Side redevelopment. "We understand our moral imperatives," she said.

Cherryhomes, whose ward includes the Hollman area, said the city is prepared to make its case in court today: "I understand this is a very emotional argument, but the community I represent is looking forward to having this project move forward."

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1999

Activists unify to protest Hwy. 55 reroute project

NANCY NGO STAFF WRITER

In a large, peaceful display of unity, activists from the north to the south ends of Minneapolis joined forces Saturday for a common cause.

About 30 groups and 250 protesters gathered Saturday in a unification march and protest along an eight-mile route that started in North Minneapolis' Glenwood neighborhood and ended along the Highway 55 route in South Minneapolis.

Groups organizing the demonstration included the Mendota-Dakota Community, Northside Neighbors for Justice, American Indian Movement, Welfare Rights Committee and Jobs and Affordable Housing Campaign. No arrests were made; Minneapolis police simply directed traffic along the marchers' route.

The protesters also stopped by City Hall, where several groups addressed several issues.

But the reroute of Highway 55 and the demolition of low-income housing units took center stage.

"A lot of us are part of a community, but we have no say in the decisions," said Emily Lindell, who is opposed to the rerouting of Highway 55. "The message today is 'We won't be ignored.'"

"A lot of different groups have come together in an amazing sort of way."

"(When we're on) the opposite sides of town, the City Council (thinks it) can marginalize us," said Marshall Lough, a member of the Four Oaks Spiritual Encampment protesting the rerouting. "At this point we need to network."

Large groups of people also came to protest the demolition of apartments in the Glenwood/Lyndale projects.

The low-income housing units were the focus of the 1995 Hollman Consent Decree, which called for the demolition of 770 concentrated housing units to be replaced with scattered housing.

The competing sides were back in court this week when the NAACP rejected a tentative agreement to demolish 228 apartments in the Glenwood-Lyndale projects and save 70 units.

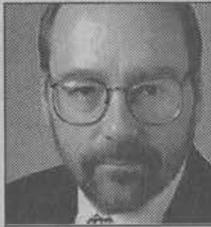
On Friday, a federal court judge said he would give the NAACP, the city of Minneapolis, the city's housing agency and Legal Aid a chance to compromise or he will make the decision for them.

Rita McDonald, a South Minneapolis resident for 30 years and a longtime community activist, said Saturday's protest was different than the others she has attended.

"It feels sacred," she said, "and more urgent."

Nancy Ngo, who covers north suburban communities, can be reached at nngo@pioneerpress.com or (651) 481-0433.

Building rail system won't magically change urban growth patterns, planners say



STEVEN DORNFELD
ASSOCIATE
EDITORIAL
PAGE EDITOR

Two scholars found that population, housing and jobs grew faster in areas *not served* by San Francisco's BART system than in areas with rail service.

Advocates of rail transit like to talk about it as a tool not only to boost transit ridership and reduce traffic congestion, but also to help shape development and discourage urban sprawl. They envision quaint new "transit villages" springing up along rail lines as people abandon the distant suburbs to live, work and shop in more convenient, compact developments.

But the desired effects on urban growth patterns are far from automatic, according to a recent study by John Landis and Robert Cervaro, professors of city and regional planning at the University of California-Berkeley.

Landis and Cervaro examined the impact of the 81-mile Bay Area Rapid Transit system in San Francisco. They summarized their findings in the spring issue of *Access*, a publication of the University of California Transportation Center.

These findings are another reason to be skeptical about all of the purported benefits of building a proposed 12-mile, \$548-million light rail transit line linking downtown Minneapolis, International Airport and the Mall of America.

Landis and Cervaro decided to study the role of BART as a "growth shaper" now that the bulk of the system has been in place for more than 20 years. Construction of the system began in 1962, and the first segments were opened in 1972.

Contrary to the expectations of BART advocates and planners, Landis and Cervaro found:

- Population grew faster in areas *not served* by BART than in areas served by the rail system. In the 20 years after BART opened, population grew by 17.1

percent in areas served by the system, compared with 35.2 percent in areas not served.

- Employment also grew more than twice as fast in areas *not served* by BART as it did in those areas with rail service.

- BART did not spur the construction of new housing in the areas it serves. Between 1970 and 1990, housing within a quarter-mile of BART stations declined by 4,000 units, or 11 percent.

The two scholars say the rail system did help promote office location and job growth near stations within San Francisco proper. However, they found BART has not been effective in spurring reinvestment downtown Berkeley, Oakland or Richmond.

One explanation for BART's lack of impact on development patterns, according to Landis and Cervaro, was that rail planning wasn't fully integrated into the land use and development planning of the entire region.

"The land use benefits from investments in rail transit are not automatic," they write. "Rail transit can contribute to positive change, but rarely creates it."

Another apparent reason was that BART evolved largely as a suburban commuter railroad, with large, free parking lots surrounding most of the stations. The parking lots and accompanying traffic were hardly magnets for new residential or commercial development.

Landis and Cervaro are not the first scholars to question the effectiveness of rail transit as a tool for reshaping urban growth.

In 1996, two urban planners at the UCLA examined the impact of the long-awaited rail transit line between Los

Angeles and Long Beach. The line runs 22 miles through what they described as "the poorest and most neglected neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles."

"After six years, ridership has risen significantly," they found, "but areas around the stations remain unchanged — disinvested, forsaken and decaying — denying planners' dreams of transit villages and depriving surrounding communities of their hopes for a better economic future."

Melvin Webber, editor of *Access* magazine and a noted urban planner at UC-Berkeley, says such experiences with rail are not unique. "Metropolitan areas around the country have been building or expanding rail systems and, with some notable exceptions, experiencing similarly disappointing patronage and urbanization effects."

Other scholars suggest that rail transit investments must be accompanied by strong land use controls, as well as higher taxes and tighter restrictions on auto use — policies that most politicians are unwilling to even discuss.

Karen Lyons, a planner for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council who specializes in transit and land use, acknowledges that effectively using rail transit to shape development "is not a slam-dunk."

But Lyons says Portland has been successful in integrating its transit and land-use planning to achieve desired forms of development around its transit stations. She believes officials here will be able to do the same along the Hiawatha LRT line. Already, she says, there is considerable interest in the corridor among developers.

That may be true. But there also may be resistance in some neighborhoods along the corridor to the idea of having higher-density development with more people, cars and traffic near their backyards.

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PIONEER PRESS

EDITORIAL

PUBLIC HOUSING

St. Paul residents seem to be well-served

Using "good news" and "public housing" in the same sentence has been a rarity in this nation's history. But now we hear it — about public housing in St. Paul. Ah, what relief.

The vast majority of residents in St. Paul's 4,300 subsidized rental housing units are satisfied with where they live. That's the message from a new report from Wilder Research Center.

That means the best news of all for children, whose parents say they live in stable, safe homes. Of the 10,000 low-income residents who live in public housing, 5,200 are under age 18. The average family income is \$11,000. They live in high-rises, or in one of the 450 scattered site homes throughout the city.

And they're doing OK.

The Wilder survey shows that 86 percent of low-income residents are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with where they live. That speaks well of much in the city, including government services, police protection and public schools.

It also reflects well on the tenant screening process. Only 42 residents were evicted last year, or about 1 percent. Tenants undergo a rigorous evaluation, including criminal background checks and renter history, before they are accepted for public housing. Those who don't show a capacity for taking care of their homes are denied the opportunity to rent; those who pass muster appear to be good tenants and community members.

Of course, the news of satisfaction of many hardly dispels the hardships of the almost 4,000 low-income city residents on waiting lists for subsidized housing. Some relief will arrive over the next three years when 2,500 new units are added.

The picture is less rosy, also, as the residents note displeasure with the high number of teen-agers who are unsupervised. Longer school days and year-round schools might take up the slack, if the community and state finally acknowledge the value of more education for all youth.

Other problems persist, such as poor language skills for some immigrants and other adjustments to American life. Yet stability of place is an important ingredient to peace of mind. Unlike the urban areas of popular culture, low-income housing shouldn't connote stereotypes of high crime and other urban miseries. In this category, St. Paul certainly is well above average.

But almost 4,000 low-income people are still on the waiting list for subsidized housing.

Deal OKs demolition of housing project

*Minneapolis, NAACP
still must approve it*

By Kevin Diaz
Star Tribune Staff Writer

NAACP leaders, on the verge of a courtroom showdown with top city officials, tentatively agreed Thursday to the demolition of the 220-unit Glenwood public housing projects in north Minneapolis that have been the scene of recent protests.

Under the compromise, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) would demolish Glenwood and leave the adjoining 86-unit Lynedale projects standing, at least for now.

The agreement, which came under immediate criticism from dissidents within the NAACP, was part of a framework worked out among attorneys who met in U.S. District Judge James Rosenbaum's private conference room adjacent to a crowded federal courtroom in downtown Minneapolis.

If it holds up in the coming weeks, the deal would end a summer of confrontation between city leaders and black activists who have accused the city of carrying out a program of gentrification on the North Side site known as the Hollman area.

HOUSING continues on A19:

— *The agreement to demolish the units was made before the metro's affordable-housing crisis began.*

HOUSING from A1**NAACP, others need to ratify framework of the agreement**

It would also clear the way for the eventual redevelopment of the North Side projects, the most ambitious urban renewal initiative in the Twin Cities in recent years.

The projects are slated for demolition under a 1995 agreement between the city and the NAACP and Minneapolis Legal Aid Society that calls for providing housing for the poor elsewhere in the Twin Cities area, including the suburbs, instead of concentrating it in the Glenwood-Lyndale area of north Minneapolis. The NAACP wanted to halt the demolition because creation of replacement units hasn't kept pace with the demolition.

The 1995 demolition agreement preceded the metrowide affordable housing crisis, in which an influx of immigrants and a tight low-end housing supply have combined to raise rents and create vacancy rates below 2 percent. In recent weeks some NAACP members have said the group made a mistake in agreeing to tear down housing.

The framework for Thursday's agreement, which will go to several NAACP and government leadership bodies for ratification within 20 days, generally follows the lines of a compromise offered by Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton last month.

"We're very close, we're 20 days from an agreement," said Sayles Belton, who appeared in court with Council President Jackie Cherryhomes and MPHA Executive Director Cora McCorvey. "I'm very pleased we're almost there."

NAACP attorney Tom White said the deal "contains many things people want," including preservation of the Lyndale units, a speeded-up replacement housing program, extended use of government Section 8 rent subsidy vouchers for displaced residents, and stronger guarantees for minority participation in the eventual redevelopment of the Hollman area.

Not acceptable

While the deal was praised by Sayles Belton, Cherryhomes and Minneapolis NAACP Branch President Rickie Campbell, it came under withering criticism from several NAACP members and black pastors who were arrested while blocking the demolition of the Glenwood projects on June 8.

"This is not what we wanted," said Rev. Curtis Herron, one of eight North Side pastors arrested at the demonstration. "This is not acceptable."

Demolition of the projects was mandated under a 1995 legal settlement — the Hollman Consent Decree — which stemmed from a desegregation lawsuit brought by the NAACP and Legal Aid. Since then, however, the NAACP and others have alleged that the fact that replacement housing called for in the decree has not kept up with the pace of demolition has led to an increase in homelessness.

The Glenwood and Lyndale projects are parts of the larger Hollman area, which includes the previously razed Sumner-Olson housing projects. Altogether, 424 housing units have been demolished under the Hollman plan, while 54 units have been replaced out of 770 that are planned in different parts of the Twin Cities area.

The June 8 protests, which involved 14 arrests, prompted Sayles Belton to postpone demolition of the Glenwood projects. Last month, the mayor and other city leaders again agreed to hold off the bulldozers until the NAACP took its case to court.

Thursday's hearing was the expected showdown. But, barring new developments, disgruntled NAACP members said it does not look like the mostly empty Glenwood units will remain for long.

"We're doing a deal to tear down Glenwood, and the NAACP membership just voted against that on Saturday," said Steve Wash, an NAACP member who attended the court hearing. "I don't understand how this works. If we lose, let's lose because we fight, not because we gave it away."

'Very happy'

Other NAACP members, however, view it differently.

"The NAACP is very happy with what happened here today," White, the attorney, said outside the courthouse after the hearing.

Campbell, standing beside White, pronounced the deal "acceptable. . . . If it wasn't we wouldn't be standing here."

It remains unclear, however, whether the agreement will pass muster with the Minneapolis NAACP's executive committee, which is expected to take it up at its next meeting on Sept. 13. The executive committee approved a similar proposal from the mayor

What's next:

The parties have 20 days to ratify the housing agreement worked out Thursday. Here are the two key players' plans:

- **NAACP:** The group's executive committee is expected to vote on the tentative agreement Sept. 13.
- **City of Minneapolis:** The City Council is expected to approve the plan, along with \$300,000 for the renovation of Lyndale projects, on Tuesday. Some details on the agreement might not be worked out until the next regularly scheduled meeting on Sept. 17.

received notice of the meeting. And there is debate within the organization over whether the executive committee or the mem-

bers have the last word.

Divisions over the Glenwood projects have strained relationships both within the NAACP and

the Legal Aid Society, which broke with the NAACP and argued in favor of going forward with the demolition.

"Different people are in different positions on this," said Rev. Randy Staten, who also was among those arrested at Glenwood. "But at least this is a beginning. We have to move forward from here."

The City Council must approve \$300,000 to renovate the Lyndale housing units, only 18 of which remain occupied. The appropriation failed in a committee

vote last month, although the money is now part of both competing versions of an affordable housing initiative the council is expected to consider Tuesday.

The tentative agreement is scheduled to go back before Rosenbaum, who presided over the original Hollman settlement. It also needs approval from the public housing board, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Metropolitan Council, which were all defendants in the Hollman suit.

Business center and Traders Market are new lights for Phillips

The Phillips neighborhood makes mixed news: Honeywell's coming sale of its headquarters, hopefully to a community-minded purchaser. On the bright side, new homes and a classy soccer field. But on the dark side, last week's murder of a boy and a young man.

But just ahead are two clearly positive developments that, like the new homes and soccer field, can boost Phillips' image. One is an ecology-based business center with offices and factory space. The other is a remodeled warehouse with offices and retail, arts and food businesses. Both are at distant ends of Phillips far from Honeywell.

Tenants have begun moving into each, although grand openings won't take place until later this fall. Together, the two new facilities — along with those in adjacent neighborhoods — represent fresh hope in the inner city. These two projects began with the grass-roots efforts of inner-city residents. Both seek new business and jobs for residents.

One is the Green Institute's \$5.8 million Phillips Eco-Enterprise Center at E. 28th St. and Hiawatha Av. in Phillips' southeast corner. The second is the \$3.5 million Ancient Traders Market being developed by

the American Indian Business Development Corp. (AIBDC) at 11th and E. Franklin Aves. in the northeast part of Phillips. The market extends basic AIBDC operations westward one block on Franklin, with an arts extension planned.

Workers are putting the finishing touches on each project, laying tile, enclosing ceilings, painting stairways and much more. And the tenants are arriving at high-quality new quarters in a neighborhood where such facilities, outside of Honeywell, hospitals, and a few other activities, aren't the norm. Still to come: Remodeling of Phillips landmark Sears.

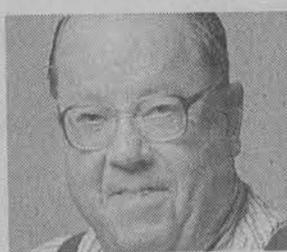
Last week, the Energy Conservatory, a two-decade manufacturer of systems to assess home energy conservation, was moving its operations into the Eco-Enterprise Center. And this week, Douglas Padilla, a Northeast Minneapolis artist and businessman, begins moving into his new Ancient Traders Market gallery.

The AIBDC and Green Institute have parallel histories. The AIBDC was organized by some Phillips women, mainly American Indian, who were alarmed at the neighborhood's decline in the 1970s as jobs and wealth moved away. Indians continue as the board majority. The Green Institute was organized by Phillips residents opposed to a Hennepin County proposal for an environmentally dirty garbage transfer station after tearing down housing. That would have contributed to further neighborhood decline. The residents won; and residents remain the institute's board majority.

In the late 1970s, the AIBDC organizers decided the neighborhood needed a Franklin Avenue shopping center to improve livability and provide access to food and other essentials. Getting a needed federal grant took years, but one was obtained. Foundations and government helped. The shopping center opened in 1983. In 1989, AIBDC opened a business center to incubate small businesses bringing jobs and entrepreneurs to Franklin Avenue. Later the retiring owners of D.C. Sales sold their building, now Ancient Traders, to AIBDC for one-third its value plus lifetime monthly payments. The Ancient Traders grand opening is planned for Dec. 1.

The Green Institute was organized to provide an energy-focused alternative to the garbage station. What's been developed is one of America's most conservation-designed buildings; it saves energy, on one hand, by reusing materials, and, on the other hand, by using cutting-edge technologies.

A visitor enters the Eco-Enterprise parking lot, where even the grass islands are designed so no dirty storm water runs into a public sewer. The building's bricks are 100 years old. The inside offices have big windows for lighting and are partly openable for fresh air. The factory section has 44 skylights, each with a



Leonard Inskip

downward-pointing mirror that moves hourly with the sun, thereby greatly expanding the inside natural light and reducing a need for electric lighting. More than 100 wells 60 feet deep tap underground water for summer cooling and winter heating and then recycle it; the building has no furnace. Even indoor heat is partially recaptured as inside air is expelled outdoors. Carpets are recyclable. In many other ways, the ecologist goes on. The grand opening dates are Oct. 22 (tenants) and Oct. 23 (community).

Getting a new or modernized building is not the only goal for either AIBDC or the Green Institute. Theresa Carr, AIBDC director, enthusiastically describes a planned

public plaza to connect Ancient Traders to shopping center parking. Her staff also will manage the Franklin Avenue Business Association's publicly financed street-scaping next year to make Franklin between 16th and Chicago Avenues more attractive and pedestrian-

friendly. There also will be changes in shopping center design, shrubbery and lighting to prevent crime. An hourly tourist bus — a program designed by AIBDC — passes Ancient Traders. Carr also intends to acquire the corner building across 11th Avenue and convert it to artists' quarters. That building is just east of a onetime porno theater, the old Franklin Theater, now being converted to an arts gallery and performing arts.

The Green Institute also operates a deconstruction business to recapture usable building materials from structures being demolished, plus a reuse store to sell such materials. Michael Krause, institute director, says it soon will launch a pilot project with the Minneapolis Community Development Agency to salvage materials from housing the MCDA demolishes. That complements a fresh MCDA approach under new director Steve Cramer to reduce its demolitions. The Green Institute would salvage such materials as hardwood floors, doors and mantels that previously were destroyed in tear-downs; the materials now will be more available for restoring other housing.

The institute, Krause says, also has bought for \$1 an MCDA duplex in Phillips seemingly headed for demolition; once restored, the duplex may be sold to the institute's own deconstruction employees, some of whom have been homeless.

The futures of both the AIBDC and Green Institute share parallel financial needs. Both have capital campaigns — the AIBDC to continue its site improvements and expansion; the Green Institute to reduce its debt obligation so that more program income can be used for other activities, including work-force training.

The Green Institute board has just adopted a five-year plan that calls for, among many other things, collaborating with the Whittier Community Development Corp. and the St. Paul's Neighborhood Development Center (NDC) on developing business and jobs at the Great Lake Center (Sears); the NDC, meanwhile, has been a partner with AIBDC in training Indian entrepreneurs.

What all this means is that some exciting things are happening in the neighborhood often called Minneapolis' poorest. Between housing in the west, Ancient Traders in the north and Eco-Enterprise in the southeast, Phillips is getting new assets to help build a better future.

— Leonard Inskip is a Star Tribune columnist and editorial writer.

Between housing in the west, Ancient Traders in the north and Eco-Enterprise in the southeast, Phillips is getting new assets to help build a better future.

It's time to accept the Hollman agreement

STRIB 9-29-99

Counterpoint

Seven years ago, Legal Aid and the Minneapolis chapter of the NAACP sued the city of Minneapolis, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in order to: deconcentrate public housing, offer greater housing choices for low-income families and provide better quality housing. The lawsuit settlement was issued by the Federal District Court in April 1995. Since then, the MPHA and the city have been working very hard, with input and support from the community, to implement the settlement which will create a new mixed-income community on the Near North Side of Minneapolis, and new public and affordable housing throughout the city and the suburbs.

The NAACP has reversed its position on the lawsuit regarding the deconcentration of public housing and has challenged the planned demolition of the remaining distressed public

housing units. We listened to their concerns and developed compromise solutions in good faith.

To settle the dispute, we went back to court on Sept. 2, where the NAACP, MPHA and the city all accepted a framework agreement initiated by the NAACP that would refurbish 70 of the Hollman units for occupancy while work continues on the Near North Redevelopment plan. The court gave us 20 days to get our respective governing bodies to officially act on the framework agreement, and to find the funding for the interim housing.

The Minneapolis City Council and MPHA board approved the agreement, secured the funding, and reaffirmed this reasonable and responsible plan. Unfortunately, the NAACP has reversed course again; on Sept. 20, its executive

committee rejected the very agreement it helped author. We all returned to court on Sept. 24 where U.S. District Court Judge James Rosenbaum made it clear that if the framework agreement on the table was not reconsidered and accepted, he would rule on this matter before this week is over. On Monday the NAACP, rather than approving the Sept. 2 framework agreement, provided another different proposal with new demands that we find unacceptable.

We must move ahead, accept the Sept. 2 agreement and get beyond our differences. We encourage the NAACP to do just that. Then we can make real progress in providing housing to families and creating renewal in our community.

— *Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton, City Council President Jackie Cherryhomes, and Cora McCorvey, executive director, Minneapolis Public Housing Authority.*

Minneapolis starts trying to reinvent its riverfront

A proposed city master plan for the upper Mississippi urges a reshaping of the riverfront and nearby areas, much of it on the west bank. It recommends that these changes take place over the next several decades.

By Steve Brandt
Star Tribune Staff Writer

A long-anticipated plan to transform the upper Mississippi River waterfront of Minneapolis begins its journey through City Hall when the Planning Commission meets tonight. Advocates portray the plan as a visionary blueprint for the next several decades for a waterfront at best neglected by inattention and at worst abused by industrial pollution.

The plan sketches the river as a green-fringed strip for recreation and wildlife. It urges redevelopment of adjacent frontage to add 2,500 households and 2,000 jobs, yielding a higher tax base.

Judging by an informal City Council discussion earlier this month, support among elected officials for the ambitious, yet

costly, proposal is waxing.

Yet many details sought by neighborhood supporters of change, let alone the businesses that would be displaced, have not been disclosed. And that's dampened enthusiasm among some who represent potentially the most ardent constituency for change — neighborhood activists who've waited for years for action to replace piles of studies.

Indeed, one group representing upper river neighborhoods has joined with some river-area businesses to ask planning officials for a time out on approval at City Hall. A letter from the Mississippi Corridor Neighborhood Coalition and area firms outlines joint concerns.

RIVERFRONT continues on B5:
— Plan envisions housing, light industry on the riverfront.

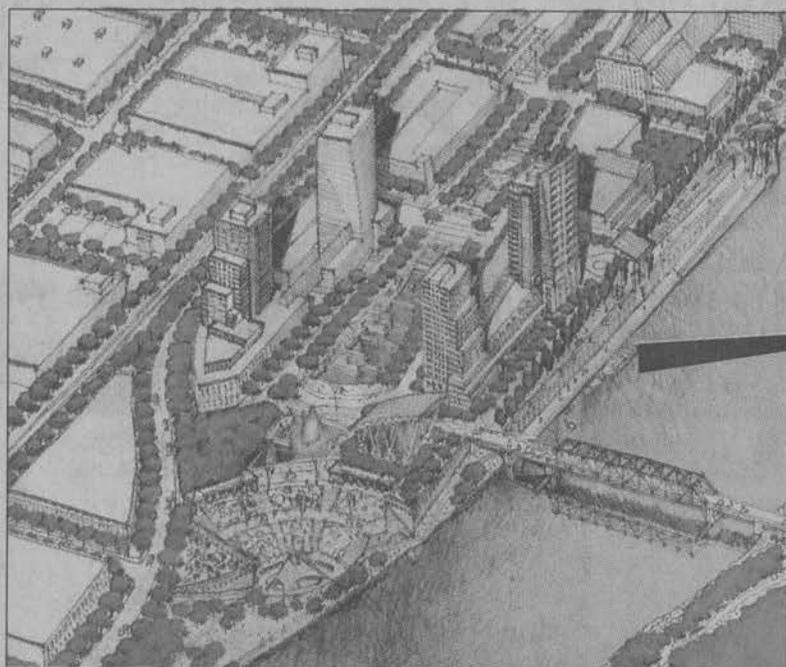


Illustration by Wallace Roberts and Todd

This is an artist's concept of the proposed Mississippi Promenade area on the west bank of the river south of Lowry Avenue. It would combine high-density housing, offices and retail shops, a storm water-filtration park oriented toward the downtown skyline and an amphitheater.



Star Tribune map by Jane Friedmann

Reshaping the riverfront

Recommended first steps:
Create nonprofit Upper Riverfront Development Corporation

1. Connect West River Parkway and 26th Av. N.
2. Acquire rail bridge for pedestrian/bike use
3. Grain Belt conference center; reuse brewhouse. Develop portion of Grain Belt area as art park, small marina, riverfront park
4. Extend riverfront paths to rail bridge
5. Relocate Lafarge Corp. cement terminal

Proposed major features:

6. Pedestrian crossing added to rail bridge
7. Oak savanna restoration
8. River Terrace (variable-density housing)
9. Pedestrian overpass/grand staircase
10. Construct parkway between Lowry and 41st Avs. N.
11. Mixed-use development
12. Cable-held Lowry Bridge with riverbank plaza
13. Botanical garden/conservatory
14. Pedestrian overpass
15. Connection of scattered parks
16. Riverfront bars/restaurants preserved
17. Mississippi Promenade:
 - High-density housing
 - Retail/office space
 - Hard-edged river plaza for strollers/diners
 - Stormwater ponds preserve downtown view
18. Construct parkway between 26th and Lowry Avs. N.; serves as industrial buffer
19. Housing on Tenneco Packaging plant site
20. Skyline park and amphitheater
21. High-density office development

Source: BRW, Inc.

- Add continuous pedestrian and bike trails
- Construct West River Parkway
- Convert Marshall Street NE to boulevard
- Spruce up major streets to river

Major themes

- Develop planted riverbank for erosion control, wildlife habitat
- Convert heavy industry to housing, parks and light industry
- Increase housing units, jobs and tax yield

RIVERFRONT from B1

Some residents object to plan for 20-story mixed-use towers

The letter from the coalition and the companies, led by American Iron & Steel, complains to the city that "the inadequate public participation process has left us with no community agreement on the plan's goals and outcomes." There's also uncertainty on how long it will take City Hall to act.

Reaction to the plan has been hamstrung by the brevity of the published summary. The full plan, 118 pages in its proof format last week, isn't expected to be published for weeks.

It spells out many details sought by those who have lobbied to put the upper riverfront on a par with the park-lined stretches below the Plymouth Avenue Bridge. They want specifics, particularly on habitat and riverbank features to improve the river as a natural resource.

The plan's dominant theme is a drastic conversion of how the land is used, especially on the west side, which authors argue is only the latest wrinkle in the economic evolution of a riverfront from sawmills to railroads to barges. It argues that dense housing and more job-intensive light industry will yield enough added taxes to justify the change, while parks and plazas make better use of the riverfront than scrapyards and lumber yards.

Complex questions

This conversion poses the difficult issue of how the city makes zoning changes to allow the plan to proceed, yet doesn't hamper businesses from making investments to stay competitive if the city can't acquire or develop their sites for 20 or 30 years.

Huge expanses on the west bank, especially just north and south of the Lowry Avenue Bridge, now are devoted to heavy industry or to the city's barge terminal. The plan advocates moving those businesses and closing the city harbor. New, more job-intensive light industry would be added, but set back from the river, separated from it by a parkway extended from Plymouth Avenue to the Camden Bridge and a rail line. A large housing complex, ranging in density from apartments lining Interstate Hwy. 94 to some parkside single-family homes, would fill most of the area between Lowry and the Camden Bridge.

An even denser residential-office complex would be developed south of Lowry. Planners are talking of 50 housing units per acre, or more than five times the density of a typical Minneapolis block of single-family homes. They plan a two-level, half-mile paved promenade along the riverfront here, to mix strollers, casual bikers and diners. A watercourse would run through the development, part of storm-water-cleansing areas added to the upper river. A 1,000-seat amphitheater would be added nearby.

Towering controversy

This Mississippi Promenade complex has drawn heavy criticism. Some residents who attended discussions earlier this year with planners objected to 20-story towers envisioned for this mixed-use area. Others argue that the proposed hard-surface river edge is more appropriate to the downtown riverfront.

Planners say the residential

density would help generate money to recoup the large investment in cleanup of industrial contamination and to finance new parks and parkways.

"They're telling us the only way we're going to get anything done is with inappropriate land uses?" said longtime riverfront activist Fran Guminga.

The plan also budgets \$7 million for soil-retaining plants and other techniques to reduce erosion and add greenery.

Changes urged for the northeast Minneapolis side are mostly limited to the narrower frontage between NE Marshall Street and the river. Between the Riverside power plant and the old Grain Belt brewery, most private land would be bought to combine several unconnected parks. Some Victorian-era homes or entertainment businesses, such as the Polish Palace bar, would be retained as river entertainment draws.

Marshall would keep truck traffic, unlike parkways, but planners want it to be a boulevard, intending to soften what the plan calls a "harsh" street dominated by hard surfaces.

More plans brewing

At Grain Belt, where much of the complex is already leased, planners advocate using the spacious brewhouse as the centerpiece for a conference center. Also proposed are an art park and development of the adjacent riverfront as a park, with a marina renting small watercraft.

The plan would treat two nearby neighbors differently. Graco would continue developing its corporate complex, but Scherer Brothers Lumber would be encouraged to relocate, making space for an office park. For the short term, planners say, they hope to route recreational paths or riverfront management along easements on the firms' river edges.

Factors likely to get attention at City Hall as policymakers consider the plan are costs, rezoning and how to make such a plan move ahead.

Cost estimates are incomplete.

The cost of public improvements such as parks, parkways, and eventually a new bridge at Lowry, is projected at \$142 million. That includes \$40 million to buy land, relocate owners and clear buildings. Another \$62.5 million is projected to clear areas for the two big housing-office areas, based on market values and relocation cost factors.

American Iron President John Isaacs labels these estimates as wildly optimistic. There's also a huge unknown cost for dealing with land contamination, a factor that's likely to remain a wild card pending more investigation on each site.

The plan gives no outlook for how much money is expected from the two dozen potential sources of aid it thinks the project might tap. The plan's economic consultant estimates that the two major housing-office complexes would generate at least \$10 million in added taxes when finished.

But that's a long way off, perhaps 50 to 100 years, in the opinion of City Council Member Lisa McDonald, who heads the council committee that would put the changes into zoning law. The

plan urges formation of a riverfront development corporation to focus on pushing the plan to completion.

Amending the city's comprehensive plan and rezoning studies would be first steps. Some planners suggest an intensive round of visits with businesses to determine their long-range plans, and learn when some might be willing to consider selling.

Public meeting

Tonight the Minneapolis Planning Commission will begin formal consideration of a proposed master plan for the city's upper riverfront. The agenda calls for a one-hour of presentation of the plan, a half-hour of public comment and 20 minutes of commission discussion.

► **Time:** 6 p.m.

► **Place:** Franklin Junior High School, 1501 Aldrich Av. N.

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A new way to blossom?

A bold concept for part of Minneapolis' Phillips neighborhood boosts housing, puts a focus on children and aims to thwart crime.

By Linda Mack
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Drive by the 2100 block of Portland Avenue S. and it looks like ground zero of urban decay. But walk into the middle of the block and it feels like summer camp: winding sidewalks, brightly colored play areas, a pavilion and a community garden all tucked behind the houses.

Just blocks from where two young people were gunned down on a recent Sunday afternoon, a quiet nonprofit group called Hope Community has created a place where kids and families can live safely.

The kind of community Hope has created on this one inner-city block has inspired a plan for 60 blocks of the Phillips neighborhood that is so bold it has city leaders reeling. Today the Minneapolis City Council will decide whether to ask the Metropolitan Council for \$150,000 to help develop the plan, which aims to breathe new life into the north half of Phillips by adding housing, interlacing the blocks with green space and taming the car.

PHILLIPS continues on B7:
— Plan proposes virtually no demolition of existing housing.

The germ of the idea

On a stretch of Portland Av. S., Hope Community, a nonprofit agency, has created a model block for Children's Village. Its success has inspired the plan's extension to the north half of Phillips. Hope has redeveloped about two-thirds of the block and has plans for the rest.



Star Tribune photo by Jerry Holt

Kids enjoy a playground Thursday in the middle of the 2100 block of Portland Av. S., where Hope Community has rehabbed houses and created gathering spaces away from busy streets.

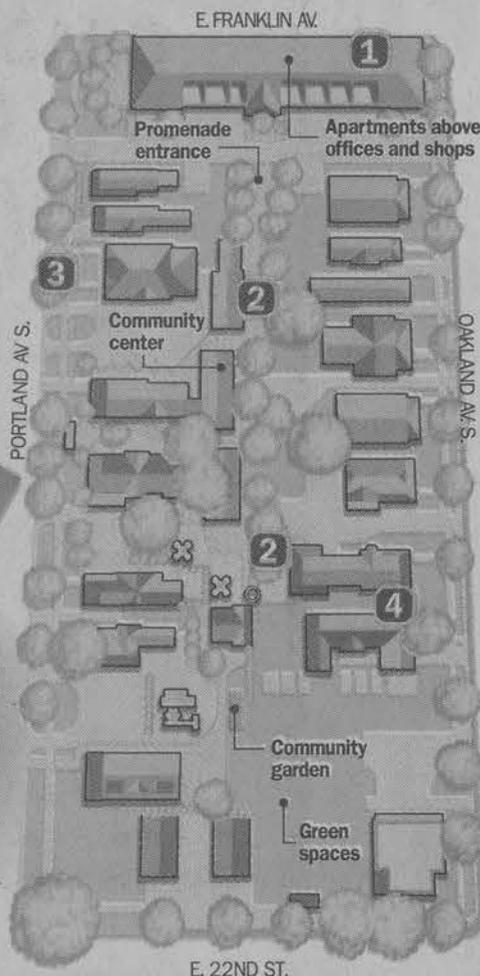
Rebuilding a neighborhood

The Ventura Village neighborhood is developing an ambitious plan to rebuild the north half of Minneapolis' beleaguered Phillips neighborhood as a "Children's Village," a safe place for children and families. The Minneapolis City Council will decide today whether to apply for a Metropolitan Council grant of \$150,000 to assist the development of the plan. The idea is to add 2,800 units of housing to increase the density of the neighborhood while keeping the low-rise streetscape. Here are the main elements of the proposal:

- **1** Revitalize Franklin Avenue with mixed-use buildings that have housing above commercial space.
- **2** Interlace the blocks with midblock walkways to provide safe passageways for children to a new system of smaller parks and play areas.
- **A "yellow brick road"** of winding walkways in the middle of the block.
- **Play areas behind the houses** give kids a place to play near home. A pavilion gives residents a place for picnics or celebrations.
- **A community garden** and a play lot provide more shared space.
- **3** Traffic calming by narrowing Park and Portland Avenues and planting trees to buffer sidewalks from busy roads.
- **4** Add townhouses or row houses, carriage houses in alleys or apartments over garages.

Other highlights

- Housing built around the north edge of crime-ridden Peavy Park, to create eyes on the park and reclaim the space for the community.
- A deck over I-94 for 500 housing units grouped around a green space.



PHILLIPS from B1

Plan aims to breathe new life into north half of Phillips

The idea: More people mean more eyes on the street and less drug-dealing and crime.

Among neighborhood leaders' suggestions:

► Building a deck over Interstate Hwy. 94 to provide space for new housing but also to reconnect Phillips with downtown.

► Loosening city zoning rules so thousands of new housing units can be tucked into the neighborhood on vacant lots, in carriage houses on the alleys, over new commercial buildings on Franklin Avenue and around the north edge of Peavey Park. The idea is high-density, low-profile, said Jim Graham, a representative of the Ventura Village neighborhood, the newly created citizens' group for the north half of Phillips.

City leaders react

When the grant application came before members of the council's Ways and Means Committee Tuesday, "their eyes grew wide," said Minneapolis architect Dean Dovolis, who is donating



Architect Dean Dovolis

\$70,000 of his firm's time to the project.

The scope would dwarf the controversial rebuilding of a part of north Minneapolis planned in the wake of the Hollman lawsuit to decentralize public housing. The difference: The Ventura Village plan proposes virtually no demolition. Even so, city officials expressed concern that dealing with its implications could swamp city staff and resources.

Steve Cramer, executive di-

rector of the Minneapolis Community Development Agency, said it is a very large-scale vision. "It has some very challenging concepts in terms of density and land use and a bridge over the freeway, a lot of innovative ideas that might cause you to say, 'Boy, I don't know if we can pull that off,'" he said. "But the challenge is to look beyond that. The way to start is to bite off a chunk of it and move to implement part of the vision."

That's exactly what the Hope community organization has been doing on Portland Avenue. In 1977 three Catholic nuns opened a hospitality house and shelter for women that kept going while the block around it deteriorated, said Deanna Foster, who has been Hope's executive director since 1993.

"It was the center of the worst, with vacant and boarded buildings, five crack houses," she said. "Everybody said there's no hope for that block. But we thought, if we can get enough normal people here, maybe we could bring it back."

The organization started buying and rehabilitating buildings for housing. But it also wanted to create a community. "We kept asking, 'How can you take an environment that was destroyed

and create one where people can relate?'" Foster said. "When we created spaces for the kids, that brought the families together."

The Hope block now has 16 affordable rental units in nine buildings, with about 60 residents. The second floor of one house is a community kids' space. The people who live on the block share lunch in another space each noon. Midblock outdoor spaces also foster community, away from the traffic and dangers of the street.

How it blossomed

With the model created, the question was how to export it. That's where Dovolis and Kurt Schreck, president of Bruegger's Bagels, came in. Schreck had a plant at 1920 Portland Av. S. and had met Foster while working on Franklin Avenue revitalization. He knew Dovolis, who had worked on Franklin when he was growing up. On the January afternoon the three met, the vision for a revived neighborhood was forged.

"When I walked into this block and saw this oasis, I was fascinated," Dovolis said. He and St. Paul architect Dennis Grebner took the ideas they saw and drew up a plan for a 16-block area bounded by Interstate Hwy. 35W

and Chicago Av. S. and I-94 and E. 24th St. They called it "Children's Village."

The Ventura Village neighborhood saw those plans last spring and asked to extend them east to Hiawatha Avenue. It's that 60-block effort that the Metropolitan Council grant would assist.

"We'd been talking about carriage houses above garages, about designing crime out of the neighborhood," said Ventura Village representative Graham. "Children's Village had everything we wanted."

Now, a fast and furious four months later, the grassroots plan has made its way to City Hall. Graham says that private developers and community development organizations already have expressed interest in seven blocks.

Jim Niland, the City Council member for the area, agrees the plan is bold but says that's what's needed to turn around the inner city.

But will it all work? Graham said a neighborhood resident asked that question at a recent meeting.

A recent immigrant replied: "When light comes, darkness recedes."

The NAACP loses its bid to reuse North Side units while replacement housing is built.

Judge OKs demolition of projects

By Steve Brandt
Star Tribune Staff Writer

A federal judge cleared the way Thursday for demolition of 300 public housing units at the mostly vacant Glenwood and Lyndale housing projects in north Minneapolis.

The city's public housing authority plans to resume demolition as soon as it can work out contract snarls that followed Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton's June 8 decision to suspend demolition in the face of civil disobedience. Demolition is expected to resume later this fall.

U.S. District Judge James Rosenbaum rejected a motion by the Minneapolis branch of the NAACP to bar demolition so the two projects could be reoccupied until more replacement housing is built. The NAACP said in a statement that it will abide by the decision. But the city could again face physical opposition from anti-demolition activists.

HOUSING continues on A17:

— *Demolition contractors whose work was suspended have brought \$490,000 in claims against the city.*

HOUSING from A1

Demolition contractors bring \$490,000 in claims against city

Rosenbaum handled a 1992 lawsuit brought by the NAACP and Legal Aid Society. They argued that minority public housing residents were segregated in poor areas of the city, especially the North Side projects.

A 1995 settlement calls for putting at least 80 new units in parts of Minneapolis without concentrations of poverty and racial minorities, and as many as 690 units in suburbs. But it didn't require new housing to be built before demolition. The Minneapolis Public Housing Authority has razed 416 units so far in the Sumner Field and Olson housing projects. Demolition was proceeding at the nearby Glenwood and Lyndale projects when opponents blocked machinery in June, resulting in 14 arrests. A redevelopment that includes mixed-income housing is slated for the site straddling Olson Hwy.

Weighing a response

North Side ministers and others who have blocked heavy equipment to protest the demolition met Thursday night to begin forming a response.

One, the Rev. Curtis Herron, said the decision saddened him. "It was tragic for our city and especially for our poor people," he said. Although the NAACP argued that a tightened rental market and homelessness should be considered, Rosenbaum referred them to the political arena. "The court cannot be a social and community planner empowered to solve all of the community's ever-changing problems," his order said.

The city faces \$490,000 in claims from demolition contractors whose work was suspended. The housing authority plans to negotiate with them next week on those claims, which include actual costs and estimates of lost profits. Efforts had been made to get settlement work into the hands of minority- and female-owned business; three of the five firms whose work was stopped are minority-owned, and one is owned by a woman.

Rosenbaum said his role under the settlement is to ensure that the

parties, including six government agencies, carry out their duties. He said that the settlement specifically bars attempts to increase those obligations. The NAACP wants the Glenwood and Lyndale units to be fixed up and reoccupied, with city and federal agencies footing that bill.

A tentative deal to settle the demolition dispute was reached Sept. 2. The city would have repaired 70 Lyndale units that would be occupied for up to two years. But the NAACP's Executive Committee rejected that last week. Rosenbaum last Friday prodded for a new agreement, but the city on Monday rejected a new NAACP proposal for reoccupation of 140 Glenwood-Lyndale units.

Only 54 of the 770 new public housing units the settlement requires have been occupied; only eight are in Minneapolis. Rosenbaum labeled that a "sorry history."

The judge noted that the demolition issue would have been settled had Sayles Belton not stopped equipment, "thereby putting herself in defiance of the [settlement] order and frustrating its intent."

Looking ahead

Sayles Belton, City Council President Jackie Cherryhomes, and public housing Executive Director Cora McCorvey said in a joint statement Thursday that the decision moves redevelopment of the site forward. "We encourage everyone to put our differences aside and come together on this essential work," they said.

Rickie Campbell, NAACP branch president, said the organization disagreed with the decision but will abide by it, and will monitor the obligations of the public agencies under the settlement.

Added Ron Edwards, a community activist: "The NAACP just couldn't give the judge the kind of arguments to make the decision they wanted, even if he had wanted to." He said he expects more attempts to block demolition.

Meanwhile, Legal Aid litigation director Tim Thompson said the



Star Tribune map by Jane Friedmann

organization is preparing to ask Rosenbaum to amend the settlement to make it easier to develop replacement units. Key features would include some elements of the aborted Sept. 2 agreement, including the ability to put some new units in St. Paul and in some parts of Minneapolis where they ordinarily would be barred, such as the proposed Urban Village housing development near the Uptown area. The agreement generally prohibits developing new public housing units in areas with concentrations of poverty or of minority residents.

Cherryhomes and NAACP housing committee chairman Ed McDonald said they think their organizations would be likely to back such a move. Legal Aid agrees with NAACP that the city is moving too slowly on replacement housing, although it has said the housing authority is doing better at developing suburban public housing than other metro areas under similar court orders.

Cherryhomes said the city remains committed to an accelerated timetable for replacing demolished units spelled out in the Sept. 2 document. It calls for 127 replacement units by the end of the year across the region, more than double the current total, and 264 units by June 30. All 770 units would be developed by April 2002.

A city offer the NAACP was right to refuse

In response to the Sept. 29 Counterpoint "It's time to accept the Hollman agreement": Rather than being wrongfully chastised by city leadership for allegedly "reversing its course" and standing in the way of "progress," the NAACP is to be commended for taking the only proper step available to it — a principled attempt to rein in the city's runaway violation of its replacement obligations under the Hollman consent decree, a violation that has had serious consequences for hundreds of the city's low-income renters.

If allowed to proceed, the city's intended action (demolition of the 300 remaining Hollman units) will render it impossible to regain any semblance of the balance between demolition and replacement envisioned in the consent decree.

In fact, the city leaders who signed the Sept. 29 Counterpoint were in federal court on Sept. 2 and therefore know that their statements about NAACP agreeing to the proposed settlement on that day are false. On Sept. 2, attorneys for all the parties indicated to the court that after some discus-

Counterpoint

sion that morning, the attorneys had agreed among themselves to submit a settlement offer to their clients for approval rather than argue the NAACP's motion for preliminary injunction that day. None of the attorneys represented to the court that they had authority to accept the settlement that day on behalf of their clients or that their clients had approved it. In fact, the attorney for the federal defendants informed the court and all present that the terms of the agreement had not been fully defined.

In these circumstances it is highly disingenuous for city leaders to allege that the NAACP had gone back on its alleged approval of the proposed settlement when upon proper review the NAACP membership and executive committee rejected it.

Likewise, Judge James Rosenbaum did not direct the NAACP on Sept. 24 to accept this particular settlement or face his ruling, as the Counterpoint

writers assert. He simply cautioned all parties that if they did not settle the matter, he would issue a ruling on the NAACP's motion.

Now, about the city's proposed settlement, touted as "compromise solutions in good faith": It is no such thing. There are 300 units at Glenwood and Lyndale that the city proposes to demolish. Each unit is of crucial value in this housing crisis. The city's offer to use 70 of these units temporarily affects only 23 percent of the units in question and would do so for a period of time not tied to the achievement of replacement housing but to the city's own timeline for redeveloping the Hollman site.

A more apt comparison is that by making such an offer in the midst of a housing crisis, city leadership is like a robber who first takes \$300 of your hard-earned money, then gives you back \$70 (until next week, he says) and expects you to consider him a reasonable fellow.

— Kirk Hill, Minneapolis. Director, Minnesota Tenants Union.

\$1.3-billion package OK'd

New Met Council approves plans for road, transit projects

By David Peterson
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Six months after being appointed with promises to start moving the Twin Cities area away from reliance on the automobile, the new Metropolitan Council approved a \$1.3 billion package of highway and other projects Wednesday that represents essentially no change from what its predecessors were planning.

Council members said they simply came along too late to substantially change a plan that had been in the making for months before they took office.

But some environmentalists

and transit advocates said they are disappointed to see it taking so long for change to occur.

"I'm going to burn some bridges with the Met Council and say that I am afraid this list is evidence that the council is not serious about transportation and transit reform," said Peter Bachman of the Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy.

PROJECTS continues on A10

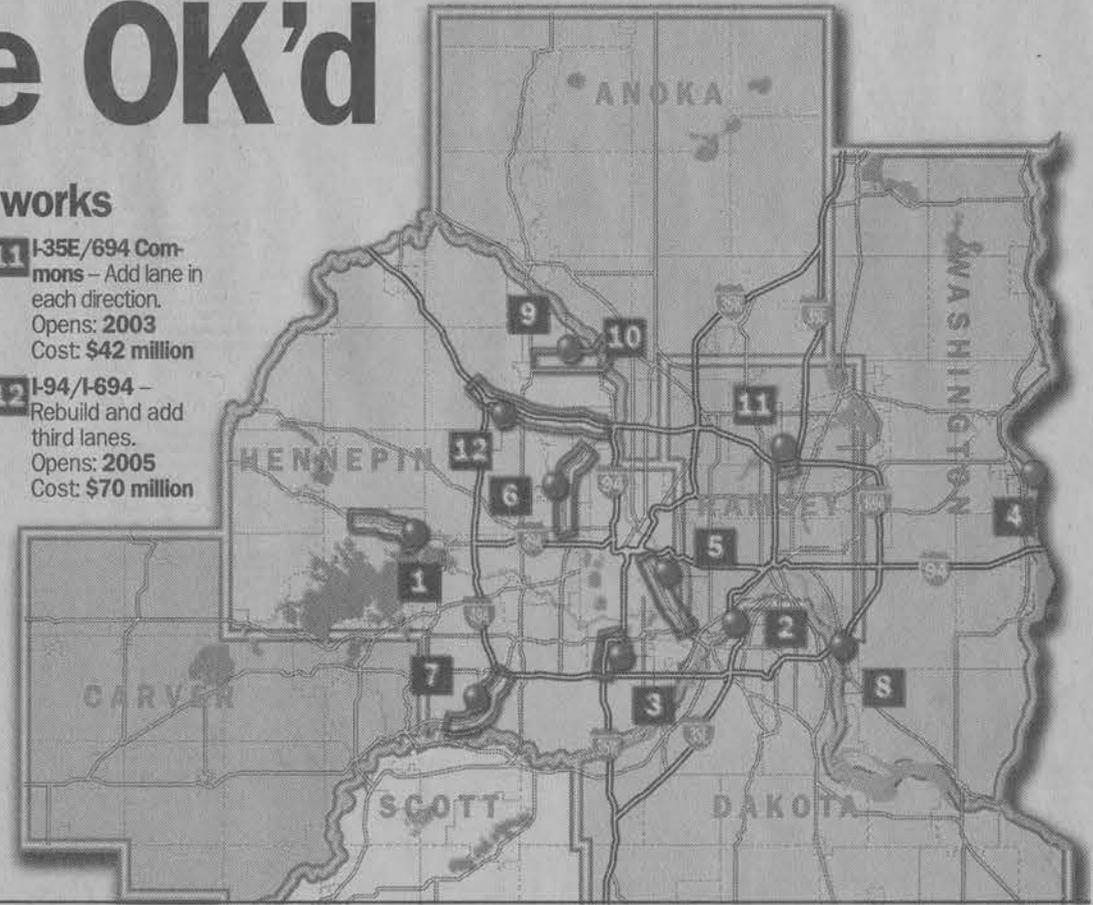
ALSO INSIDE:

► *It's fall and traffic has taken a turn for the worse. Laurie Blake's column.*

B2

Major road projects in the works

- 1 Hwy. 12** – Build 2-lane freeway. Opens: 2006. Cost: \$74 million
- 2 I-35E** – Widen Mississippi bridge. Opens: 2003. Cost: \$28 million
- 3 I-35W** – Rebuild Hwy. 62 common area; add car-pool/bus lane. Opens: 2003. Cost: \$84 million
- 4 St. Croix bridge** Opens: Unknown. Cost: \$112 million
- 5 Hwy. 55** – Finish 4-lane from Hwy. 62 to I-94. Opens: 2000. Cost: \$85 million
- 6 Hwy. 100** – Build 6-lane freeway. Opens: 2003. Cost: \$108 million
- 7 Hwy. 212** – Build 4- and 6-lane freeway. Opens: 2000. Cost: \$57 million
- 8 I-494 and Hwy. 61** Replace and widen Wakota Bridge. Opens: 2009. Cost: \$118 million
- 9 Hwy. 610** – Build new freeway. Opens: 2001. Cost: \$56 million
- 10 Hwy. 610 bridge** – Add second bridge over Mississippi. Opens: 2002. Cost: \$17 million
- 11 I-35E/694 Commons** – Add lane in each direction. Opens: 2003. Cost: \$42 million
- 12 I-94/I-694** – Rebuild and add third lanes. Opens: 2005. Cost: \$70 million



PROJECTS from A1

Major highway projects focus on help for north metro area

Other advocates of change disagree.

"It's like turning the Titanic around," said Bill Morrish, program director for the University of Minnesota's Design Center for the American Urban Landscape. "It's easy to talk about big plans, but they are working really hard to reorganize people's thinking and do the basic structural work that needs doing. It ain't glamorous, but it's important."

Rep. Myron Orfield, DFL-Minneapolis, one of the leading anti-sprawl voices, said that while this group is the best Met Council in a quarter-century, it dismays him to think that some of the new projects will promote sprawl "for a generation to come."

Some property developers say that small but significant changes are taking place, and they don't like them. Former Council Member Rick Packer pointed to \$15 million in transportation money that the new council laid its hands on last summer, mainly to assemble land around transit stations.

Though it's not much in the scheme of things, he said, "\$15 million is no chump change, either. That's a bridge for some suburb somewhere."

Metropolitan Council Chairman Ted Mondale said the program of highway and transit work from 2000 to 2003 is "the last big piece of business by the old council." Work is well underway, he said, to influence the next set of plans, which will be approved next September.

Indeed, the council's vote to approve the plans Wednesday was followed immediately by a basic tutorial from council staff members on what exactly is in-

involved in approving highway projects, with emphasis on explaining at what stages the council can influence what's happening.

Council Member Caren Dewar described the backgrounder as "extremely helpful," adding that council members want to get much more involved early in highway planning. Past councils, according to Packer and other longtime members, have essentially rubber-stamped the work of a body known as the Transportation Advisory Board, a group of local elected officials and others who sift through project requests.

The list of major highway projects is heavy on help for the long-underserved northern part of the metro area, including a major freeway upgrade for Hwy. 100 from Glenwood Avenue northward, where today motorists are forced to keep stopping for traffic lights.

Met Council transportation planner Carl Ohrn said that most of the highway projects fall within the already developed part of the metro area, therefore shouldn't promote sprawl. About 30 percent of the \$1 billion goes to expansion of the road system, he said, with the rest going to preserve and better manage the existing system, through "sane" lanes and the like.

Major projects include the replacement of an Interstate Hwy. 35E bridge described as a serious safety problem; the controversial

Stillwater bridge across the St. Croix River; the addition of a car-pool/bus lane on Interstate Hwy. 35W in Richfield, and a new version of Hwy. 212 on a new right-of-way extending outward from Eden Prairie.

The plan — about \$1 billion for highways and \$300 million for transit projects such as buses and bus garages — was to have been approved last week. Approval was stalled because suburbs along the Interstate Hwy. 494 corridor were caught by surprise when the Minnesota Department of Transportation quietly postponed a \$30 million project there because of major cost overruns in other projects.

That led to a round of meetings and phone calls that produced an agreement that the suburbs will accept the delay and that the Transportation Department will make sure the project gets going as soon as possible.

The state agency does the work of planning and building highways, but regional planning agencies such as the Met Council must be involved when federal money is involved.

Eden Prairie Council Member Ross Thorfinnson Jr. said the state pledge is "a little soft," in that it doesn't commit to a date. But, he said, the suburbs aren't interested in seeing their priorities "slammed in" at the cost of having dozens of others delayed.

Met Council Member Carolyn Rodriguez, a longtime transit advocate, said that change will occur, but not all at once. "The learning curve for us is immense," she said. "It's like getting a Ph.D. in urban design."

CITY PAGES

Helter Shelter

With winter coming on and police sweeping the riverfront, life in Minneapolis's homeless encampments turns more perilous by the day

by Joseph Hart, p.10

LAUGH, DAMMIT: IMPROV COMEDY ROUNDUP *Ursu*, p.29 • BIG HITS OF MID-AMERICA p.48

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But Brad Rixmann, the chief manager and owner of Pawn America, maintains that his company—which runs 11 outlets around the state—was singled out: “Cities have used moratoriums as an excuse to stop pawn stores and other businesses from opening up in their community,” Rixmann says. He notes that his company is very image-conscious and does not buy firearms at any of its local outlets. He also says that the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis currently require pawnshops to use the Automated Pawn System (APS), which helps track stolen goods.

According to statistics from St. Paul’s License Inspections and Environmental Protection department, St. Paul had 12 pawnshops in 1995 and currently has 10, plus the two pending applications. Minneapolis, by comparison, has only four full-scale pawnshops, plus one jewelry store which has a pawn license limited to jewelry.

St. Paul Mayor Norm Coleman opposed the moratorium as an unnecessarily “drastic measure” which interfered with legal, well-regulated businesses. The St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce and the St. Paul Business Review Council came out against it for similar reasons. Critics like Rixmann noted that the city had recently addressed the very same issue, with study by PED and a moratorium that was in place for 22 months until it ended in November 1996. Out of that process, the City Council had required that all new pawnshops hold a Special Condition Use Permit, designed to provide a venue for neighborhood review. In Kasella’s case, the neighborhood’s West 7th/Fort Road Federation sent a letter stating that it did

not take an official position on his application.

Nevertheless, a moratorium resolution passed 5-2 on September 2, with council members Jerry Blakey and Chris Coleman voting against it. The mayor noted in a letter on September 16 that since the measure had passed with the necessary five votes to override his veto, he wasn’t going to exercise that option. But before the ultimate vote on the official ordinance, council member Jay Benanav changed his mind.

“Larry Kasella did talk to me and I listened,” says Benanav. “I guess I finally concluded that he played by the rules as they were in place when he applied for his pawnshop license. We changed the rules on this guy.” Benanav says his opinion was also swayed after he visited the

“He played by the rules as they were in place when he applied for his pawnshop license,” council member Jay Benanav says of Kasella. “We changed the rules on this guy.”

Pawn America store at University and Fry in his ward, but he says “80 percent” of the reason for his switch was Kasella’s plight. He says he may have been willing to vote for a measure which would not have affected pending applications.

The September 23 ordinance vote passed 4-2, with Coleman and Benanav dissenting. Blakey was out of the room at the time, but says he would have voted against the measure again. City Hall scuttlebutt held that the mayor would likely veto the ordinance: He now had an opening because the council was a vote short in its

ability to trump him. Kasella waited while the five-day window for the Mayor to step in ticked away and finally expired.

The scaled-down ordinance, which applies only to pawnshops, calls for a moratorium of up to three months while PED conducts its study, and provides a provision for the council to extend it an additional three months.

Benanav was surprised when the Mayor sent the measure along and allowed it to pass, albeit without his signature. Alluding to a recent gubernatorial campaign photo-op held by Gov. Carlson and Coleman, Benanav says, “I would have suggested that he use that big veto pen he got from the governor and veto this resolution as well. I was hoping that he would see the plight of Larry Kasella and small business in general.”

Instead, the mayor sent an October 2 letter noting that while he was “accommodating” the council on the issue, “I want to do everything in my power to minimize the impact of this moratorium.” To that end, Coleman directed PED to get cracking and complete its study within 30 days.

Bostrom says that’s fine with him: “I have no problem with that. There’s no intention to drag any feet with this.” But council member Chris Coleman (no relation to the mayor) sees it differently. “It really represents to me a mayor who’s trying to play both sides of the fence on this thing,” he says. “I think it was disingenuous and really unfair to the Larry Kasellas of the world.” The Larry Kasella of St. Paul agrees, adding that he has more basic concerns than the mayor’s fence-sitting: “Is the city going to pay my rent on this thing until the city lifts the moratorium?”

Pawn America’s Rixmann says his firm is considering its options, which could include legal action. “We feel that we have been wronged, so it would be unwise for us not to explore that alternative. We have really been

singled out.” Rixmann says Pawn America’s outlet at the corner of University and Fry in St. Paul opened June 26 after the company invested \$1.1 million in the site. Its newest store opened just a few weeks ago, without incident, in Bloomington.

The case in favor of pawnshops even got a boost from the St. Paul Police Department, in the form of a letter from Chief William Finney to Mayor Coleman on October 2 that began, “I would like to express my support for the licensing of new pawnshops, which have evolved from businesses that were perceived as seamy, ‘fly by night’ operations dealing with criminals, to clean, bright retail outlets comparable to Best Buy or Circuit City.” The letter went on to say that police have recovered \$19,500 worth of stolen goods this year thanks to the Automated Pawn System, and recounted a 1996 incident that led to the recovery of a laptop computer stolen from Sen. Paul Wellstone’s car.

As for the Mayor’s call for getting the study completed quickly, Rixmann says that in his experience, government efforts to expedite the process never seem to pan out as promised: “In all of our dealings with government,” he concludes, “that is really never what occurs.” He says he won’t be surprised to see the moratorium dragged out to the end of the maximum time period.

Kasella notes that while Pawn America has the resources either to wait out the moratorium or to go after the city in court, he can’t afford to do either. He says he doesn’t want to get the city “ticked off” at him, because he’d still like to open his shop on West Seventh, but he can’t help but feel like he’s been caught in political pincers that weren’t meant for him.

“This is going to probably put me out of business before I even get into business,” he says with a rueful chuckle. “I basically gave my life to the city and now I can’t open a business in the city.” CP

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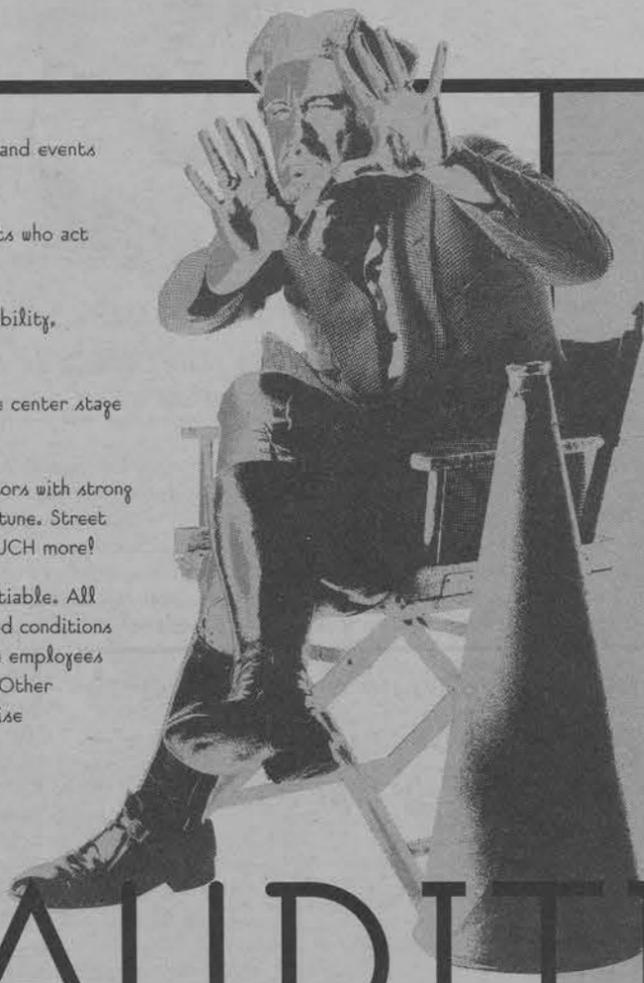
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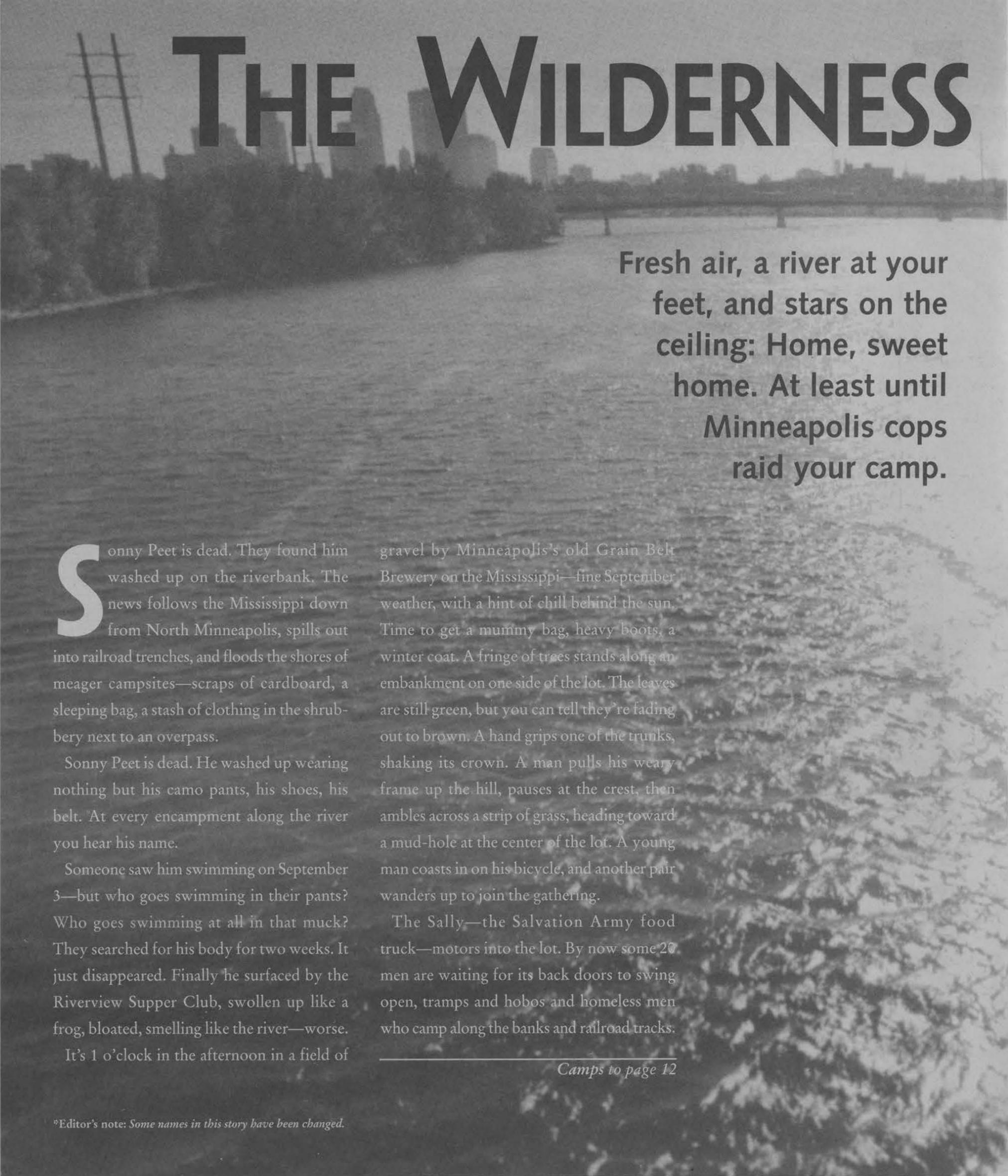
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THE WILDERNESS



Fresh air, a river at your feet, and stars on the ceiling: Home, sweet home. At least until Minneapolis cops raid your camp.

Sonny Peet is dead. They found him washed up on the riverbank. The news follows the Mississippi down from North Minneapolis, spills out into railroad trenches, and floods the shores of meager campsites—scraps of cardboard, a sleeping bag, a stash of clothing in the shrubbery next to an overpass.

Sonny Peet is dead. He washed up wearing nothing but his camo pants, his shoes, his belt. At every encampment along the river you hear his name.

Someone saw him swimming on September 3—but who goes swimming in their pants? Who goes swimming at all in that muck? They searched for his body for two weeks. It just disappeared. Finally he surfaced by the Riverview Supper Club, swollen up like a frog, bloated, smelling like the river—worse.

It's 1 o'clock in the afternoon in a field of

gravel by Minneapolis's old Grain Belt Brewery on the Mississippi—fine September weather, with a hint of chill behind the sun. Time to get a mummy bag, heavy boots, a winter coat. A fringe of trees stands along an embankment on one side of the lot. The leaves are still green, but you can tell they're fading out to brown. A hand grips one of the trunks, shaking its crown. A man pulls his weary frame up the hill, pauses at the crest, then ambles across a strip of grass, heading toward a mud-hole at the center of the lot. A young man coasts in on his bicycle, and another pair wanders up to join the gathering.

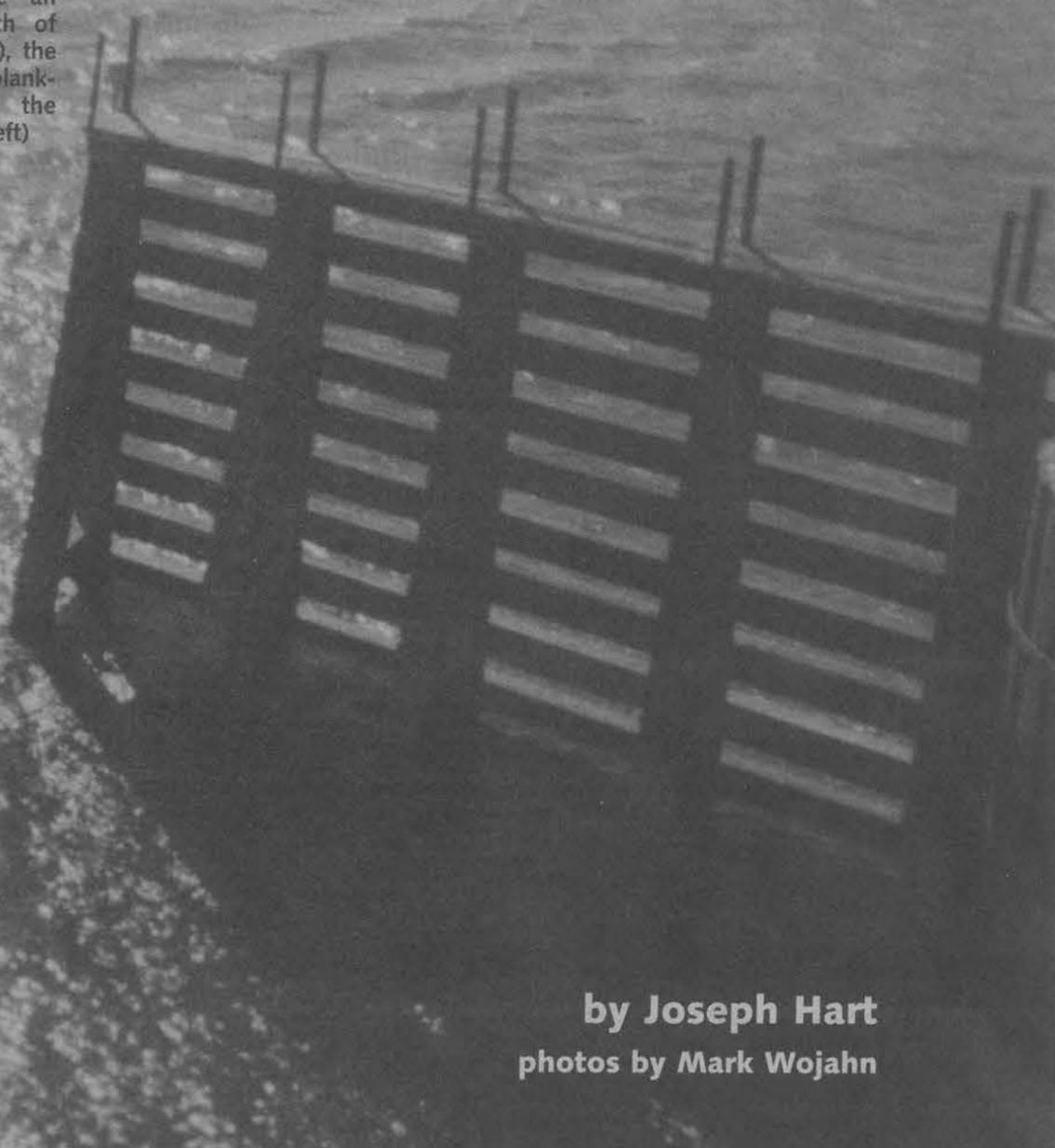
The Sally—the Salvation Army food truck—motors into the lot. By now some 20 men are waiting for its back doors to swing open, tramps and hobos and homeless men who camp along the banks and railroad tracks.

Camps to page 12

EXPERIENCE



Two encampments—one an open-air spot just north of St. Anthony Main (above), the other a more permanent plank-and-tarp dwelling on the Mississippi's west bank (left)



by Joseph Hart
photos by Mark Wojahn

CAMPS from page 10

The Sally punctuates days on the riverfront, meals served off the truck having worked their way into the rhythm of daily life here. The vehicle bounces slowly over the bumps, stopping by the mud-hole to unlatch its rear doors. It's Wednesday, the day they pass out hot food.

"Hey, Jeff. Hey, Dana."

"Hey, Mike, Jim."

"D'ja hear about Sonny Peet?"

Sonny Peet is the latest casualty among the river and railroad dwellers ("camp tramps" is the name some have adopted). To the authorities, he was just one more vagrant who didn't stand out in life or death. The county medical examiners looked over Dennis "Sonny" Peet, age 39, single, no permanent address, and ruled his death a fresh-water drowning. Case closed.

But all along the river, the camp tramps keep his story alive—as a fatal instance, a consequence of the dangers they face. First the news of his death and then, sucking behind it like a rip tide, the rumors: Sonny Peet got tipped into the river by skinheads, by turf kids from gangland. Sonny Peet got beat by some drunk tramp—maybe you, maybe me. Sonny Peet slipped and fell into the current. Sonny Peet got himself drowned by the cops. Then a shake of the head. "Shit," one guy in line says, "it's getting more dangerous down here every day."

Sally's giving out ribs today. Good stuff. Something to drink? Coffee? More bikes materialize. A camper pulls up, a little worse for the wear and creaking on its springs. A stooped old man in a Camel T-shirt and a very small girl step out to take their place in line. A pickup with a sagging bed lets out four men, their sunbaked faces grimy with work dirt.

Wesley LaGrange arrives a minute or two after the truck. He exchanges handshakes and hellos all around. "I got my jacket," he tells a friend. "See? Got my winter jacket out of storage." He spins on his heel showing off the coat, a dull-green parka he's had stashed at a friend's house along with winter supplies. Wesley lives year-round at his campsite just off the railroad tracks.

White paper bags all around: ribs, juice, broth with lots of crackers in Styrofoam cups. The men scatter out and squat by the power poles, opening bags and quieting down to eat. For a while there's time to twist a Top cigarette and talk a little. A death in the family is big news. Part of the calculus of life on the river lately is death, or beating, or rape, or losing your camp to cop sweeps. (Minneapolis police say they don't keep separate statistics on violence in the camps or on the tracks, but the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless says 50 homeless people died around the state last year, most of them in Minneapolis and St. Paul, most from exposure or violence.)

The camper with the young girl inside pulls away first. Then the pickup. Bicycles evaporate. Men slip two by two back into the woods along the river. The Sally wagon closes shop and lumbers off. Wesley turns his back on the brewery and stands alone, again, in the empty field of gravel before heading toward camp.

Whatever you make of Sonny Peet's death, it underscores a simple truth: The margins of error have never been slimmer for homeless men in the city many of them have come to call "Minnehopeless."

In 1995, the state legislature eliminated the Work Readiness program, which offered a \$203 monthly check, job training, food stamps, and eligibility for county-paid emergency shelter to some 1,800 people statewide, mostly adult men and most of them in Hennepin County. Two years later, as part of welfare reform, the federal government tightened the



Last week the couple pictured here swung by to visit their friends, Frankie and Clarence, who had set up camp near a Minneapolis railroad bridge earlier this fall

guidelines for obtaining Supplemental Security Income (SSI)—financial assistance to people with disabilities—and another round of men, previously considered disabled because of drug or alcohol addiction, dropped through the safety net.

Meanwhile, the slow leak of homeless shelter space in the Twin Cities turned into a hemorrhage: Before 1995 the county had promised shelter to anyone who needed it, and maintained bed space for 1,200. But shortly after the Work Readiness changes, the offer was revoked; in May 1996 the county closed the

of alternative housing.

A handful of smaller shelters, like the one at St. Stephen's Church in South Minneapolis, offer bunk beds for up to four weeks at a time. St. Stephen's has 40 spaces; staffers say on any given night the facility turns away as many people as it allows in. And the situation is perhaps most dire for teens: A study conducted last October found 377 "unaccompanied youth" in Minnesota on the streets that month. The three local institutions that offer beds for homeless kids have space for fewer than 50.

But while shelter space has declined drastically, demand has shot up. Across the state, the rate of homelessness is as high as it's been since anyone started keeping track of the

Across the state, the rate of homelessness is as high as it's been since anyone started keeping track of the numbers.

Drake Hotel, a 600-bed shelter in Minneapolis that served mostly adult men and women without children.

Now, says Marge Wherley, who supervises the county's adult housing program, Hennepin's policy is that "The most vulnerable people should be housed first"—meaning families with children (who are put up at downtown Minneapolis's 410 shelter, and in motel rooms the county rents) and those who are certified as disabled or chronically unemployed. "That," Wherley confirms, "leaves a lot of other people out."

For them, the county provides "safe waiting" space, a stripped-down shelter that looks like a Greyhound lobby without chairs, ticket booths, or buses. Every night, people line up for one of some 250 mats and cots laid out on a bare vinyl floor. Most nights, dozens more are turned away. "We don't think it's the equivalent of shelter," Wherley says, "but it keeps people from freezing." For many, downtown's safe waiting becomes home, as months drag into years, with no increase in the possibility

numbers. The research office of the St. Paul-based Wilder Foundation, a nonprofit with more than 100 social service programs, conducts a study of homelessness every three years. According to their most recent survey, on October 23, 1997 there were 5,238 people living in Minnesota's homeless shelters, battered women's shelters, and transitional housing programs, compared to 2,875 in 1991. Add in people with what Wilder's Greg Owen calls "precarious housing"—those who live on the street, in abandoned buildings, or doubled up in friends' homes—and the numbers jump significantly: from 7,980 in 1991 to 15,759 last year.

The foundation also found that one in three of the homeless people surveyed held a job, and one in six worked full time. In previous studies, Owen says, "There's always been some marginal employment. But what we're seeing now is this core of 17 to 20 percent who are employed, and who either remain homeless or become homeless. What that tells us is that the issue is the affordable housing crisis."

Pinning down the percentage of homeless people who live outside is quite a bit more difficult than estimating the shelter population, Owen says. Last year Wilder interviewers surveyed 195 residents in metropolitan area camps—admittedly a fraction of the total population. "We certainly know it's bigger than the number we've interviewed," Owen concludes. "I think it's at least two to three times that many, and it may be as high as 10 times."

Indeed, there are stretches along the Mississippi where, if you know what to look for, it's hard not to count half a dozen camps in a 15-minute walk. Scraps of tarp are strung over driftwood and scrap lumber. Blankets and clothing lie scattered in clearings. Bundles of sleeping bags are hidden away under the shrubbery. A living room might be a couple of couch cushions, old tree stumps, maybe a car seat. Fire pits form the dining room.

Patrick Wood, who works with the North Minneapolis outreach program People Incorporated, may be the only non-tramp who regularly visits the camps, offering to hook up their residents with what social services are left for them, chiefly mental-health programs. The last time he set out to count the entire population, he came up with a total of 758 outdoor dwellers—and he knows that a number of the craftiest campers, those who tuck their bodies into old sewer pipes and nooks beneath downtown buildings, escaped even that census.

Wood says that after some five years of working with camp tramps, he's noticed that they, by and large, aren't clamoring for shelter or other government assistance. "They tend to be conservative in their politics, especially the vets. They tend to believe they should be self-reliant, that they should be able to take care of themselves." And they used to be able to do that, he argues: "When I moved here in 1974, there were probably 15 or 20 sleeping-room hotels downtown," offering beds for a few dollars a night and providing independent living for people with no jobs, low-paying jobs,

and those on fixed incomes.

But most of those beds disappeared during the office-construction boom of the 1980s; according to figures provided by Kirk Hill of the Minneapolis Tenants Union, the core city lost more than 2,000 single-room occupancy units between 1970 and 1990. And in the current rental market, where vacancy rates continue to hover under 2 percent, rents run from \$200 for a sleeping room (if you can find one) to \$600 for a one-bedroom unit. Add security deposits, and application fees ranging from \$30 to \$50 (and the increasingly stringent background screenings such fees fund), and you get an entire segment of the population locked out of the rental housing market—making it that much harder, Wood says, for homeless people to “get their hands on the bottom rung of the economic ladder.”

“I’ve been working at St. Stephen’s shelter for about 10 years,” says Mary Gallini, the shelter’s program director. “There were always people who used to camp out. It was a small percentage who did that. Now more people are forced to make that choice—to sleep outside, as opposed to being in here at our place or at a county-funded shelter like the Drake. I find people asking for a blanket who five years ago never would have dreamed of it.”

It’s a cool Friday afternoon in September, and while the rest of the city seems to be picking up paychecks, hitting the freeways early, or heading for happy hour, Wesley LaGrange is busy tracking a heckler walking over his bridge. Wesley’s down in the shrubbery, sitting on the cardboard “carpet” in his drinking camp, one of three he’s claimed for home along a stretch of train tracks in Northeast Minneapolis. A couple of cases’ worth of empties are scattered around the ground, along with soiled bags from the Sally wagon, granola bar wrappers, crushed juice boxes, and cigarette butts.

The heckler’s oaths are lost in the hum of traffic behind him—unintelligible shouts drifting down into camp. Wesley curses under his breath, but he doesn’t yell back. “That’s just starting a fight,” he figures. “The less conflict I got down here, the better off I am. See, you learn how to live out here. You learn that man’s destination is self-preservation. I could have

four or five pints in me, and I hear this boy yelling up there. I still leave it alone. Cause number one: I don’t want him getting in my camp. Number two: If he rips me off, I got to go hunt him down and then we got a fight going. Number three: Then I go to jail. See?”

He pauses and flicks his lighter to a four-inch cigar stub he’s been saving, then passes it to Larry, his friend and partner for the day. It’s usually in his other camp, his “clean camp,” that Wesley gets his share of harassment from the world above the railroad tracks. His clean camp consists of a pair of old couch cushions positioned around a scrubby poplar—it’s more open, and thus more vulnerable. His year-

round drinking camp is hidden beneath the undergrowth. There he’s stashed away his sleeping bag, his duffel with spare clothes and alarm clock, and stray bags of food he’s saved up for weekends when the Sally’s not in service. The location of his third camp is a secret. He keeps it

strictly in reserve for nights when the railroad patrol—the “bulls”—come by, handing out tickets and rousting out the men who camp along the line.

Wesley says he established his camps a couple of years ago after an altercation with his girlfriend. He owned a house back then, he claims, up in North Minneapolis. As he tells it, his girlfriend got drunk one night and stabbed him—in his neck, his arm and shoulder, and his stomach. “When I got stabbed, I went off,” he recalls. “Man’s destination is self preservation, right? I got stabbed five times. I went off. Grabbed the girl by the head. I didn’t hit her with my hand. I screwed up. I worked in the foundry. I had steel-toed boots on and I popped her in the head with my boot. I said, ‘You leave me alone.’”

“Now, I ain’t lying about this. It’s all on file. Well, it ended up where they took me to Hennepin County Medical Center. And her, too. I hit her so hard with the boot—well, you get steel upside your head, your head’s going to ball out. But I figured it was justified because, hey, she put a blade on me. She wanted to kill me. Doctors said if it had been an inch over she would have killed me.”

“They packed me up. I’m getting ready to go, then I got this big old cop wrestling me up against the wall. Split me open on the wall. She

Camps to page 15



Andy (left) says he and his friend Kirk (right) come by the Salvation Army truck stop for lunch most days, and to collect warmer clothes and bedding

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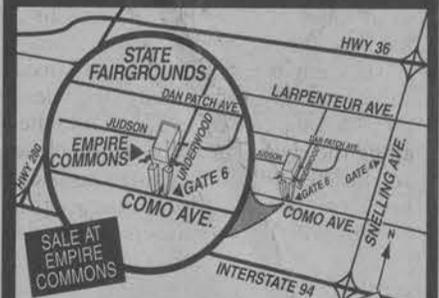
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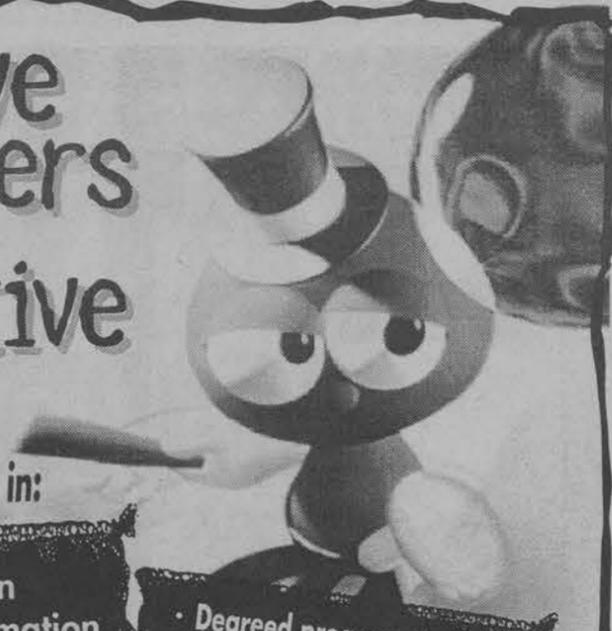
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CAMPS from page 13

and I, we both got arrested. This is what really gets me—a woman's rights in this state are better than a man's. When it comes to a man and a woman to get out of jail, it took me six hours, where it took her two hours. Is she better than me or something? Everybody says, 'Go to Texas, Wesley, go to Texas,' cause it's all different. Woman ain't got no equal right down there. She's a slave bearing babies, that's it. If she gets out of her place, man puts her back in her place, and that's it." In Wesley's version of the story, after the legal troubles with his girlfriend and some unpaid child support caught up with him, he lit out for the railroad tracks.

Lately, Wesley goes on, the occasional urge hits him to find an apartment and come in off the streets. But when he's tried, he hasn't had much luck: "I had 3,000 bucks. So I go and I apply for a spot in a building. I pay \$30 for an application fee, which is nonrefundable. That knocks me down to \$2,970, right? Then you figure first, last month's rent plus the damage deposit. Well, then they come back—'Your references ain't good enough.' Now you burned 30 bucks. It's all these high-tech idiots around here that think they're better than us that're the problem."

The other problem for camp tramps this summer has been cops. Outdoor camping has been illegal in Minneapolis for decades, but until recently police didn't go out of their way to enforce the law as long as the camps stayed out of sight. And in a city whose old

industrial areas, overgrown railroad embankments, river bluffs, and freeway overhangs have been popular since the hobo days, staying out of sight was rarely a problem for tramps who couldn't or wouldn't take advantage of the shelters.

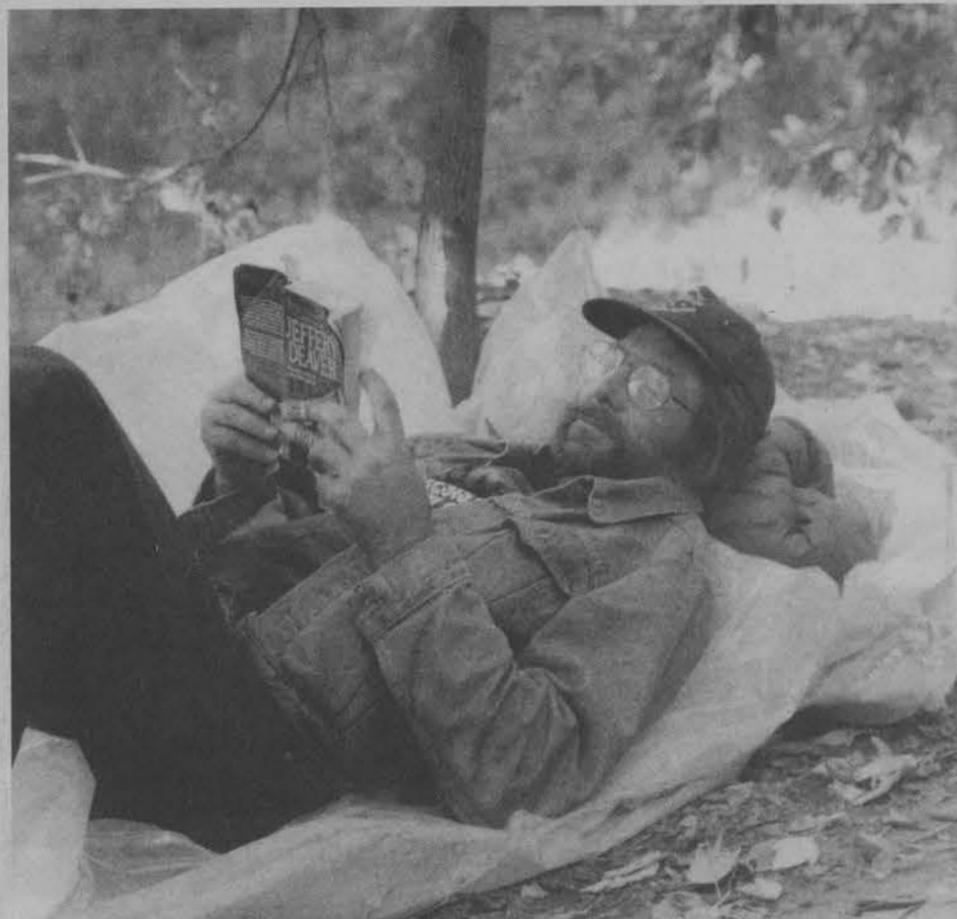
All that has changed now. Following the modifications in shelter policy and welfare law, a new crowd—people who wouldn't sleep outdoors if there were another option, and who lack the veterans' savvy—made the camps more conspicuous and more numerous, attracting attention from nearby businesses and police. Late this spring, the Minneapolis Police Department launched concentrated sweeps designed to clear the river banks of vagrants. Throughout the summer, police from

Camping has been illegal in Minneapolis for decades, but until recently police didn't go out of their way to enforce the law.

the downtown command have walked the length of the river every couple of weeks, using the no-camping ordinance as reason to tear down established camps. "They took this war on poverty a little too far," says a man who's come up from the riverfront to one of the Sally stops. "They're going

through people's property, throwing it in the river, burning it. They're attacking the camps."

Mary Erpelding, a streetworker with Hennepin County's mental-health access unit, concurs: "In the past, they've frequently had that kind of move during the Aquatennial, or around State Fair time—maybe they want to clear space for tourists to camp. But this year it went on all summer. I just saw a woman today—everything in the camp she was in got thrown into the river, things got ripped apart, their IDs got taken. And these are the only possessions that people have. They will have



Hayes, who is camped indefinitely near Nicollet Island with two friends, says he collected plastic furniture covers to use as a roof when it rains

to be replaced—you'll have to go down and get or find or steal another bag, another backpack. And they get harassed, screamed and yelled at. I'm not sure this is a job that the police are in love with—but it's a city thing."

Sharon Lubinski, the inspector in charge of

the MPD's downtown command, says that police do pull apart the makeshift shelters, but denies that anyone's belongings are taken. The MPD's policy is justified, she says, by the

Camps to page 16

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CAMPS from page 15

increase in violence on the river. The number of assaults and homicides is on the rise in the camps, she points out, and so are the exposure deaths that occur every winter. "The life they live is not a safe one," she says, stressing that the department doesn't keep separate statistics on crime that occurs in and around the camps. When violence in those areas does occur, she adds, "it's typically not where we patrol, [so] it's usually extreme because there's nobody there to stop it. One of our murders this year was committed under a bridge with a rock."

The logic behind this summer's frequent police sweeps, Lubinski says, is to move river-dwellers into the shelter system by force. "If they're in a shelter and someone's getting assaulted or raped, at least you have some staff to intervene. They should be in the shelters. That's going to be more safe."

Never mind that most of the campers have been made ineligible for shelter in the last few years, and that there is no room left at safe waiting. What's happened instead, agree social service workers who keep track of camp life, is that the sweeps have simply driven Minneapolis's homeless population deeper underground and further into the woods. This year, people on the river have taken to camping in groups of only two or three—making it easier to avoid police raids and stay mobile, to move camp every night if necessary, heading further upstream for cover.

Until as recently as last year, it wasn't difficult to find established camps of a dozen people who'd gathered around a leader or a good cook; they could last, outreach worker Patrick Wood says, a year or two before breaking up. More than 100 people at a time lived in the old General Mills grain elevator two winters ago, where temperatures kept steady enough to survive and the elements could be shut out. But the city tore the elevator down this year after



A stone's throw from Nicollet Island, these two camps along a popular stretch of the Mississippi have been inhabited by a succession of residents for more than a year



a series of murders, rapes, and assaults took place there in 1997.

Wood believes that the MPD sweeps may actually be effecting an increase in camp violence. "When you lose the permanent encampments," he says, "you lose stability in the lives of homeless folks. You lose even a marginal sense of belonging. With that comes increasing isolation. People aren't watching out for one another. I suspect that breaking up of

larger camps has made people more vulnerable to attacks from outside of the homeless community." Like others inside and outside the camps, Wood is convinced that homeless men have become targets for skinheads, gangsters, and "kids from the suburbs." He admits there is no documentation of such a trend besides the widespread rumors in the camps.

"It's very hard to get them to talk about people attacking them. No one wants to say 'I got

beat up.' But there's a definite increase in violence—and I think it's tied to the loss of stability and a loss of the larger camps."

"It seems that the attitude is that [the city] wants people to go away—that if we treat them badly they'll go back to Chicago," says St. Stephen's Mary Gallini. "But the reality is, no one is going to go away. This is where people live." And while Gallini and other shelter providers expect the police sweeps to slow down when winter comes—police, the reasoning goes, won't slog through knee-deep snow—they don't believe the camps will magically empty out with the advent of cold weather.

In the past, October 15 marked the date when Hennepin County shelters switched to their "winter policy," under which no one who asked for shelter could be turned away. Gallini says she and other members of the Shelter Providers Action Association, a recently formed local coalition, have been lobbying the county to come up with some sort of increased shelter for this winter, but so far to no avail; instead, they will spend October 15 holding a city-wide "summit" on homelessness at the downtown United Way Building.

"Shelter is not the politically correct thing to talk about right now," Gallini acknowledges. "People go, 'Oh, that's an '80s thing.' But in the '80s we didn't have 1,000 people sleeping outside every night."

It's getting on toward 4:00 in the afternoon. Time to make the 4:30 Sally stop. Wesley and Larry toss a couple beers into a bag and head down the rails.

A typical day, Wesley says, is punctuated by the Salvation Army truck. For several years it has delivered food, medical supplies, blankets—the basics—every weekday to around

Camps to page 18

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CAMPS from page 16

150 people, working as a critical link between the men in the camps and provisions that keep them from starving and freezing in the woods.

Today, though, Wesley and Larry are the only show-ups at the Sally stop. Everyone else, it seems, is staying under cover on "CODEFOR Friday." (Rumor in the camps is, that's the day when the MPD trains its computer-aided crime prevention effort on their territory; Lubinski says there's no stepped-up enforcement on Friday.) The Sally hands out bags containing two bologna sandwiches, chips, broth ("Good for alcoholics," Wesley says. "Lots of salt.") and a juice box. Larry carefully takes his sandwiches apart. He tears up two slices of bread into little pieces and scatters them at his feet for the birds.

Then he slaps the other two halves of his sandwiches together and takes a bite. After

they've eaten, Wesley and Larry put another mile on their boots walking downstream to the "six flags," a spot along the redesigned jogging path on the downtown riverfront favored by Wesley because it's out of view from the street. They find a place to sit down on a concrete

found that I'd been thrown out of my apartment while I was locked up. Eighteen months I was in jail and then I was acquitted. Can you believe that? Come out, and now I got no place to live." Thor removes his tennis shoes and curls his toes, with his feet extended straight out in front of him.

fuck? Who gives a fuck? You're living in the past. That was yesterday. What are you doing today?" Larry drops his pants and moons a pleasure boat drifting by on the water. Someone creeps up behind and asks to buy a beer. Wesley sells the one Thor gave him, for two dollars.

"I've got a .45-caliber Blackhawk back at camp," Wesley announces then to his assembled company. "When people start talking shit to me I say 'Hey, you don't want to mess with me.' I got permits to carry this stuff. I can do whatever I want. You want a little 'Nam on your ass? Come on. I'll give it to you straight."

Thor keeps up: "I got a 9 mm right here in my bag." A pause. "No, I'm just shitting you." Larry opens Thor's bag and shakes out the items: a shirt, a pair of pants, a manila envelope stuffed with papers, an inmate com-

This year, people on the river have taken to camping in groups of only two or three—making it easier to avoid police raids and stay mobile.

butress along the river. There's already someone drinking at the spot. "Call me Thor," he says as they take their places.

Thor offers beers and lights up a joint. "I just got out of prison," he tells them, "and

Thor asks if anyone's read Plato or Aristotle while he hands out the last of his beer. Larry vomits his bologna sandwich into the river. Wesley says "I grew up in Vietnam, man," and Thor comes back with, "Oh, who gives a

Camps to page 20

Southdale

(A)

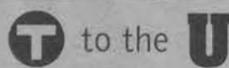


(B)

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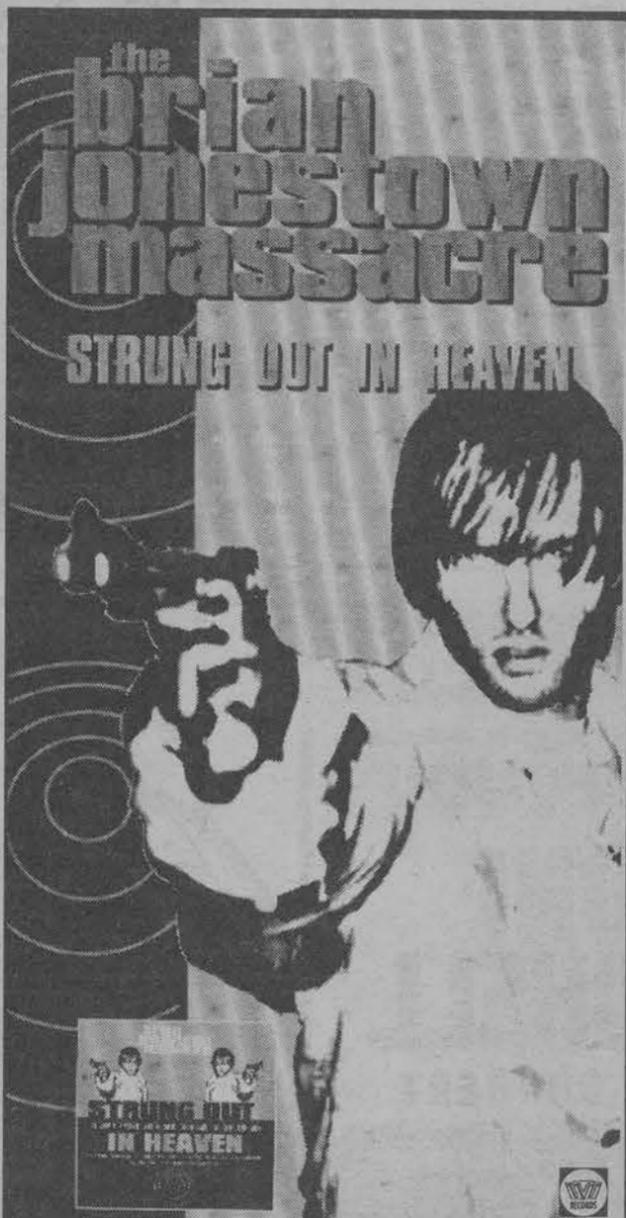
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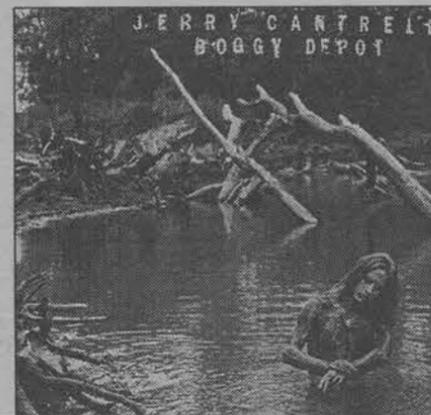
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CAMPS from page 18

plaint form. No gun. Larry buttons on the shirt, a red plaid.

Wesley offers to sell Thor his pocket radio for five bucks toward a 12-pack. Thor hands over the money. A few minutes later, Thor's forgotten the radio. Wesley pockets it, and the three men rise and walk down river, across the bridge, and up to Surdyk's liquor store. The place is busy, but everyone shuns the men. Conversations fall silent in the aisles. One customer touches his wallet through his pants, an automatic gesture provoked by the sight of the drunken threesome.

They do their business quietly and head back into the chill. It's dark now, and a wind is blowing up rain. Wesley shoulders the 12-pack and fluffs up his coat around his ears. "When I get my money in pocket," he spits against the cold, "I can play then. I got one-

and-a-half million dollars in an IRA. I tell you one thing, I can play on that half a million and never touch my million. And I tell you, I

"That's what we should do—set up camp right in one spot," says Wesley LaGrange. "And then, go ahead. Come on and take us."

can be a dirty fucking dog. I plan on being one. I do. I'm going to raise some hocus pocus. I'm going to get mad at everyone who's been mad at me. Police, number one.

"See, what I was thinking of doing was buying a piece of real estate," he goes on, unfolding his reverie into the dark. "Build a house. C'mon! You ain't got no place to go? C'mon!

You coming with father dad. I'd call myself 'father dad.' I want you to work. I want you to help out. Nothing going to be free here. A

place to crash out. You got a job? You get up and go to work. You want wake-ups? We'll get you up. Whole nine yards. I been here. I've been a tramp. I know what it's about and it sucks. But

man's destination is self-preservation, right?"

Wesley roots around in one of his bags for a few minutes and pulls out a pair of camouflage pants. Because he's a Vietnam vet, Wesley gets army surplus supplies from the Veterans Administration—the main source, along with the Sally wagon, of his belongings. He shakes the pants in Larry's direction. "Here," he

tells him, "these oughta fit you. Take them. Thirty-five inch waist? That oughta fit around your belly."

With that, he turns his attention to the police sweeps plaguing his companions on the river—an operation that hasn't yet found its way to his series of encampments. "It ain't going to change until we all put up right here." He juts out his chin, and gives a satisfied nod to the logic of the thought. A moment goes by. Then: "That's what we should do—every damn one of us set up camp right in one spot, and then, go ahead. Come on and take us. The way they're rolling this shit, they're rolling it like Vietnam. They want Vietnam, I'll give it to them. That's it. I been through the dirty shit. I shot people. They keep messing with me, I'll keep shooting." **CP**

Managing Editor Monika Bauerlein contributed to this story.

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