

Kingfield News

February 2001

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This Year's NRP Programs Offer Wide Variety of Benefits

Last year, Kingfield's Neighborhood Revitalization Program (NRP) funds bought business facade improvements, exterior housing repairs, and new decorative lights and streetscape improvements for Nicollet Avenue. This year, the business facade and housing programs will continue, and two new programs will get underway — the Community-Initiated Grant Program and the Farmer's Market.

Community-Initiated Grants

Do you ever think, "Our alley needs a speed bump," or "We ought to have a neighborhood corn-shucking"? Well, now the money is available to make things like that happen. We just need your creativity!

Under the new Community Initiated Grant Program, KFNA will be making small grants to groups of neighbors that develop projects to solve an immediate livability concern or benefit the greater neighborhood.

Here are some more ideas for projects: traffic signage; alley lighting and motion detectors; neighborhood or property clean-up projects; advocacy projects; educational programs, neighborhood events, activities for youth, families or elderly; matches for CCP/Safe planting grants. Not eligible for this program are food, lobbying, fund-raisers, events that charge admission, or events that are not open to the whole neighborhood. Projects will be funded up to a maximum of \$3,000. Guidelines are still being drafted. To discuss your idea and get an application, please call Sarah Linnes-Robinson, KFNA NRP Coordinator, 823-5980. Applications will be accepted beginning April 2, 2001.

New Farmer's Market Needs Volunteers

Kingfield has found another way to "green up" the neighborhood, and provide a place to get fresh produce. A Farmer's Market will be opening in Kingfield this spring, if we can gather a handful of volunteers to form a Planning/Oversight Committee.

The market will be funded with NRP dollars and vendor fees and is anticipated to run from May to October. We need a planning group to meet beginning in March to assist in evaluating other local markets and choosing the market site and vendors. The group will meet about every two weeks from March through April, and then meet every four to six weeks during market season to monitor progress and troubleshoot problems. Evaluation and a recommendation for the market in 2002 will occur in late fall. If you are interested, please call Sarah, KFNA NRP Coordinator, at 823-5980 x1, and plan to attend the first meeting on Thursday, March 1, 7 p.m., Martin Luther King Park at 41st and Nicollet.

Kingfield's Exterior Housing Programs will Re-Open in April 2001

Last year, KFNA initiated two new housing programs focused on exterior home improvements. One was a 4% loan that was available by lottery to any Kingfield homeowner. The second was a 1-to-1 matching grant for homeowners who qualified financially and whose home exhibited the most signs of needing repair. Both programs received more applicants than the \$150,000 of available funding, so KFNA is re-opening both programs for 2001.

Applications will be available for the first time following an informational presentation at the KFNA Annual Meeting on Monday, April 23, and will be accepted for approximately three weeks. Please do not call about the program until after April 23. Look for more information in the April Kingfield News or mark your calendar to call KFNA in April for complete guidelines and application materials. Also plan to attend the April meeting to get the first-hand scoop!

More on 38th Street ramps

Update on 38th Street ramps: In response to Kingfield concerns about traffic impacts of the proposed I-35W ramps at 38th Street, a "hybrid" ramp design is being studied that would split the ramps between 36th Street and 38th Street (northbound ramps at 38th Street and southbound ramps at 36th Street). The feasibility of this option is questionable due to the 35th Street bridge, which the 36th Street exit ramp would need to come under, and then would lead up to Stevens within a one block distance. All fixes have their own set of negative impacts (e.g., removing the 35th Street bridge).

Background: The aim of the overall project is to improve freeway access to the Lake Street area by building full-ramp access at Lake Street, which will require removing the 35th Street ramps due to the short (substandard) weave distance between the existing 31st Street ramps and 35th Street ramps. Removing the 35th/36th Street ramps is not feasible because the alternative Lake Street and 46th Street ramps could not handle the increased capacity. The one benefit of the project is that full-ramp access at Lake Street would divert approximately half of the traffic using 35th/36th Street to Lake Street, substantially reducing freeway traffic in this residential area.

Mitigation work: The Project Advisory Committee has formed a subcommittee to develop recommendations for traffic mitigation and infrastructure design for the overall project. Kingfield is forming an ad hoc committee to formulate its own recommendations regarding mitigation and design in this area, wherever the ramps are placed. See calendar — March 7 meeting.

For information, contact Jeanne Massey at jmassey1@qwest.net (or 823-2859). Those interested in joining the 38th Street ramp opposition group, contact Marnie Wells at marnie@moapp.org. (or 825-6316).

Colonial Cleaners wins Prestigious Governor's Award

Colonial Cleaners, located at 3701 Lyndale Avenue South, was honored last fall as one of six recipients of the MN Governor's Awards for Excellence in Waste and Pollution Prevention. In fact, they were the only small business to receive the award in 2000.

The present owners, Soo and Whan Chang, bought Colonial Cleaners in 1990. After purchasing the business, they installed equipment which recycles 85 to 90 percent of the waste material perchloroethylene (a primary dry-cleaning chemical) and 100 percent of the dry-cleaning cooling water for reuse on the site.

In 1997 they added an Aqua Clean wetcleaning system to reduce the use of perchloroethylene even further. Perchloroethylene is a highly volatile and hazardous chemical and a possible carcinogen. Soo Chang explains that "professional wetcleaning is a process that cleans sensitive fabrics in water using specially designed equipment, detergents and additives. It is very popular in Europe, and has become more popular here, now that government regulates the use of hazardous chemicals." Although this process is not suitable for cleaning all fabrics, it is now used at Colonial Cleaners for about 50 percent of their work.

In addition to pollution reduction, other benefits have been realized. The primary benefit is that the cleaning is much better, explains Soo. And secondarily, professional cleaning is now available for people who are allergic to chemicals, and who, in the past, were not able to use drycleaners. Cancer patients also prefer to have their clothing wetcleaned.

The conversion initially cost approximately \$100,000 with a return on the investment expected in 10 years. Colonial Cleaners has seven employees; it is open for business Monday-Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., and Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

– Mary Vanderford

Dare to Question Computers in Schools

by Heather Martens

While investigating school options for my prospective kindergartener, I've come across a rarity in public life today: an idea that remains almost completely unchallenged. That idea is that computers are good for elementary schoolchildren.

As a former elementary school teacher and computer teacher (K-3), I recognize how exciting computers' capabilities can seem. Kids will get marketable skills! Kids will have more fun learning! Kids will get connected to the world! But the reality of what kids do on computers fails to excite me. In fact, I fear that computers in elementary schools do far more harm than good.

The Alliance for Childhood, in a report issued last fall, finally dared to point out the obvious problems with computers and children. Young children need time to interact with adults for language learning and the formation of relationships; they need to be active; they need to have hands-on experiences in the arts and the natural world. They do not need more time sitting in front of a screen.

Let's examine some popular ideas about computers. Take computer skills. Most kids get about an hour a week of computer time starting in kindergarten. This is absurd. It does not take thirteen years, an hour a week, to learn how to use a computer. Children would lose nothing by starting much later. But what they lose in all those hours of their elementary school years could be very great indeed.

Computers steal the elementary school's most important resources —time and money. As a "special," computers compete for children's time directly against physical education, art, music and library. They take up space, usually in the library, and require more staff salary money than the other specials, just to keep the computers running. And when it's time for cuts, what goes? Not computers.

The opportunity cost here is staggering. Elementary school is our big chance to get kids reading. Reading has been proven repeatedly to have a huge effect on children's academic success. I want my child hooked on reading, but the schools are spending vast amounts of money to get her hooked on computers. Library budgets, not sexy enough, lose out against computers. Some schools I visited even placed their gleaming computers right next to paltry collections of dog-eared books.

Will my child get "connected" to the world through computers? Children can easily get connected to violent games, predatory email pals, and inappropriate material.

Will my child have more fun with computers? Perhaps. Computers can be fun. Mesmerizing, in fact. Just like TV, with the commercials. But does this make kids learn better? Does the potential, which sounds so exciting, match the reality?

The Alliance for Childhood says no, and it has examined what research there is. No study, according to the report, has found any benefit for young children in their sustained participation in such popular activities as word processing, making spreadsheets, or using the Internet.

Drill-and-practice programs do seem to help in some narrow skill areas, but apparently cost more and have less positive impact than one-on-one tutoring.

The Alliance's report, signed by educators, academics and others, has called for "an immediate moratorium on the further introduction of computers in early childhood and elementary education," urging public dialogue and a rigorous examination of the hazards computers pose to young children. The report made the front page of several national publications. But as far as I know, nobody is even questioning the use of computers in Minneapolis public schools.

Let's at least examine the costs and benefits of what children actually are doing on computers before we continue to fund them with the abandon that we do today. Don't let these priorities go unchallenged. I urge you to start a discussion with neighbors and educators.

(Get your own copy of what both Diane Ravitch and Raffi have signed. Send \$8 for one or \$12 for two copies of "Fool's Gold: A Critical Look at Computers in Childhood" to the Alliance for Childhood, P.O. Box 444, College Park, Maryland, 20741, or visit <http://www.allianceforchildhood.net>)

The opinions expressed in this column are those of the author and, apparently, practically nobody else.

Opinion pieces on community-related issues may be sent to Kingfield News, 3754 Pleasant Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55409. Submissions may be edited for length.

Nicollet Avenue Streetscape Update

Good news! The pedestrian level lights are up and running along Nicollet. The only unlit block will be connected as soon as the steamer can be deployed to melt the ice blocking the conduit. Once the lights are energized, Excel Energy will begin the removal of the wooden pole lighting system.

We can also expect to see 85 trees planted along the Avenue between late April and early June. These welcome additions to urban forest will provide a leafy canopy over Nicollet Avenue as they mature. The plantings will include a diverse selection of species including 19 AB Maples, 8 Black Ash, 9 Sentry Linden, 9 Honey locust, 17 Bicolor Oak, 14 Cathedral Elm and 5 Summit Ash. 24 of these trees will be in grates while the remainder will take root in the boulevards. – Lisa McDonald, 10th Ward Council Member

Money Available for Business Improvements!

If you are a Kingfield Neighborhood business owner and have been putting off that terrific mural, those sparkling new windows, or that funky awning (or some much-needed stucco patching and painting), now is the time to have the work done and pay only half the actual cost. Kingfield has begun accepting applications for a second year of business façade improvements through an NRP program called the Business Façade Improvement Program 2001, or BFIP 2001. During last year's program, neighborhood businesses had over \$150,000 in grant money approved to help them pay for such enhancements as new windows, tuck-pointing, and awnings. Business owners had to match the grant, resulting in \$300,000 in improvements to community businesses in 2000. We are hoping for an equally great response for this year's program.

Applications will be accepted through March 31, 2001 and grants will be awarded by May 1, 2001. The Business Working Group will review all applications and will give preference to applicants who have not formerly received funding, but all Kingfield businesses are eligible. For more information about BFIP 2001, or for information about serving on the Business Working Group, please contact Martha Ingram at the KFNA office, 823-5980 x2.

Affordable Housing Committee Forming

Kingfield residents interested in starting an Affordable Housing Committee for the Kingfield Neighborhood should contact

Margaret Hastings at 822-5745 or e-mail m1r3201@aol.com. With a housing vacancy rate of only 1% the need for affordable housing is at crisis proportions. An affordable housing committee could help to identify properties that could be used for affordable housing. It could also identify agencies/individuals interested in providing affordable housing in Kingfield. Providing educational and community forums to address neighborhood concerns and answer questions about what it means to be an “affordable- housing-friendly neighborhood” could also be spearheaded by this committee. – Margaret Hastings

Kingfield is Hiring and Seeking Volunteers

KFNA Hiring NRP Project Organizer

Immediate opening within your neighborhood! This half-time position offers flexible hours, good pay, interesting work on a variety of projects, and an opportunity to help improve your immediate community! We are seeking an energetic, personable, responsible, highly organized self-starter with skills in volunteer recruitment, leadership development, long-range planning, and research. If you would like to see the full job description visit the Kingfield web site at kingfield.org or call the KFNA office at 823-5980. Position posted until filled.

Kingfield News Seeks Designer and Volunteers

The Kingfield News is seeking someone with expertise in design to lay out the newsletter. Candidate must have access to computer and software needed to perform the duties. Stipend of \$150 per issue is offered. In addition, the newsletter is always seeking volunteers to write articles, compile the calendar, take pictures, and brainstorm ideas. Please call Bettina Graupner at 824-7116 if you are interested.

Kingfield and East Harriet Work Together on Community School Issues

The Kingfield and East Harriet neighborhood associations formed a joint committee in January, to work on ways to address the neighborhoods’ lack of public community school.

The joint committee will hold its first meeting on Thursday, March 1, at 7 p.m. at Martin Luther King Park Center, 41st and Nicollet. Residents of both neighborhoods are invited to join the committee or attend the organizational meeting. Those joining the committee should be willing to serve throughout the coming year. During most of the past year, a group of parents from the two neighborhoods has been pressuring the school district to make changes. Currently, East Harriet and most of Kingfield are “open attendance areas,” meaning they have no designated community school. This means residents choosing a public magnet program cannot be assured of admission to a particular community school if they don’t get into the magnet program. Additionally, residents have complained that children living on the same street cannot be assured that they will attend school together. Some parents reported receiving neither their first nor second school choice.

The Kingfield and East Harriet neighborhoods passed a joint resolution in January requesting that the school district investigate options for giving the neighborhoods a community school. They also requested that “open attendance area” residents be given three choices instead of two, and a guarantee of admission to one of those choices. The school district granted that request for families choosing schools in January for the fall of 2001.

The Kingfield resolution also asked that the entire Kingfield neighborhood be considered a single attendance area. (Residents north of 38th Street currently are part of the Lyndale School attendance area.)

For more information about the joint committee, call the Kingfield office at 823-5980.

– Heather Martens

Charter School to Purchase Good Samaritan Home

A charter school, the Friendship Academy of Fine Arts, has entered a purchase agreement and plans to close on the Good Samaritan nursing home building on May 1. The school plans to open this fall after renovating the building.

FAFA is publicly funded and will be open to city residents who are within the attendance boundaries, which are still being drawn. Kingfield probably will be included in the attendance area, said FAFA spokesperson Charlotte Burgess. East Harriet might be included as well, she said.

FAFA has requested \$21,000 in Kingfield Neighborhood Revitalization Program funding. The neighborhood would need to vote to approve the request at the upcoming annual meeting, April 23, if the Kingfield Neighborhood Association board approves the request. KFNA plans to hold a community meeting about the charter school proposal later this month. For the meeting date, call KFNA at 823-5980 or visit www.kingfield.org.

Residents of East Harriet and Kingfield have been working together to get a public community school (see article above). The group had asked the Minneapolis Public Schools to consider the Good Samaritan site at 4429 Nicollet Avenue. Southwest Area Superintendent Bob McCauley asked facilities official David Richards to look at the site, which he did on December 27, 2000. Richards reported to McCauley that the site is significantly smaller than other community school sites and would be expensive to renovate. (For full text of Richards' report, visit kingfield.org and look for "community school.")

FAFA describes itself as follows:

The Friendship Academy of Fine Arts Charter School believes that a substantial and meaningful impact in education can be made through the study of fine arts as part of the core curriculum. The arts are the embodiment of human imagination. We form human communities and cultures by making art — through stories and songs, drama and dance, painting and sculpture, architecture and design.

For more information about FAFA, leave a message for Charlotte Burgess at 823-0423

Cris DeParde is new KFNA Treasurer

The KFNA Board of Directors at their January meeting elected Chris DeParde as Board Treasurer. Chris will be filling the remainder of Michael Vanderford's term as Treasurer ending April, 2001. Chris will work with KFNA bookkeeper, Nancy Hansen, and coordinator, Sarah Linnes-Robinson, to run KFNA's recently implemented cost accounting system. The objective of the new system is to make the Treasurer's role during the NRP full implementation more reasonable. The KFNA Board's Financial Oversight Committee (which includes Chris, Nancy, Sarah, Kathy Hill, and Mary Vanderford) is monitoring and fine tuning the new cost accounting system.

Michael Vanderford resigned from the Board because of a new professional job out of state. He does plan to return to the Kingfield community within several years, however, and maybe even to the Kingfield Board! – Michael Vanderford