



Minnesota Journal

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A publication of the Citizens League

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State should move focus of education policy from school *districts* to *schools*

Schools. Think *schools* when you think about education issues in the '97 legislative session.

Schools are where the kids are. Where the teachers are. Schools are where the parents mainly relate to. If learning happens, it's in the schools. Schools tend to be about kids.

Districts are mainly about adults. Districts are where the big salaries are. Where the professional careers—and the political careers—are. Districts are where

by Ted Kolderie

the contracts get awarded, and where the pay gets set. Districts are where people go to fight about ideology and power and control.

Until fairly recently policy focused mainly on districts. The Constitution may talk about the state providing "public schools," but over the years the reality came to be The District. The district is the legal entity; schools, owned by the district, have no legal existence. So

despite the politics and the bureaucracy, governors and legislators tried to get improvement by working with districts.

Over the years the state tried a variety of things. Money. Mandates. Removing mandates (waivers). Enabling authority. Training. Research, showing "good practice." But results have been small. Districts are assured their existence, their students and their revenues, whether or not the students

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Open space system needs connectivity

by Tom Lewanski

Open spaces play an important role in the ecological health of our urban areas. They serve to protect the integrity of natural systems and mitigate the effects of human activity associated with urban areas. Open spaces address these issues by allowing water to flow and percolate, filtering pollutants and lessening runoff intensity. They purify the air of pollutants and noise and provide the habitat requirements of animals and plants. Equally important, they provide the opportunity for spiritual rejuvenation for people.

In our rush to develop cities and with our incomplete understanding of how all these natural systems work, we construct barriers that disrupt the cycles of these natural systems. Our pavement prevents the rain from infiltrating the ground; instead it runs into our streams, eroding the banks along the way, causing or compounding floods.

Land use and water quality are very closely tied together. Urbanization can, on a large scale, alter the natural watershed system, which can

Benton County courts facility decision raises issues of government efficiency

A decision over whether and where to build a new court services building in central Minnesota's Benton County raises questions about the best way to deliver services in a growing area saddled with government borders and structures created a century ago. The county board was to hold a meeting Jan. 13 to get public input on plans to build a new \$2.5 million courts facility in Foley, the county seat. The board is likely to make a decision on the facility either at that meeting or later in January.

by Dana Schroeder

Benton County, which, along with Stearns and Sherburne Counties, contains part of the city of St. Cloud, had a 1995 population of 33,362, up nearly 11 percent from 1990. Foley, located near the middle of the county, had a 1995 population of 2,010, up eight percent from 1990. But the county's population is heavily concentrated 15 miles west of Foley—in Sauk Rapids, east St. Cloud, Sartell and along U.S. Highway 10 to Rice. Between 1990 and 1995, Sauk

Rapids grew by 18 percent, to a population of 9,216, and is expected to top 10,000 by the year 2000.

The controversy over the courts building harks back to Benton County's decision about four years ago to build a new jail in Foley. Although it supported the decision editorially at the time, a Dec. 1, 1996, editorial in the *St. Cloud Times* said in hindsight the jail decision was a mistake, shaped by tradition.

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Public leadership must come from three key sectors

As Minnesota goes through major social and economic transitions, we will need strong public leadership to meet new challenges. Strong public leadership does not necessarily imply stronger government. In fact, we should think about public leadership as leadership for the general public good that must come from all three key sectors: government, business and the civic, or nonprofit, sector.

Each of these three sectors must contribute to surfacing, working on and solving public problems. But there are strong forces of erosion in each sector interfering with the ability to lead in the public domain.

Government

The public has very low trust in government, which only worsens at "higher" levels of government. There is a perception that for many the personal, family and financial sacrifice for serving in elected office is too high and that the rewards for high appointive office lag significantly behind those offered in the business sector. The further perception is that there are "more good people leaving than coming" in legislatures and in other elected and appointed offices. Those departing often have demoralizing war stories and go on to higher pay.

Leading as an obligation of citizenship. Rebuilding and supporting the civic virtue of public leadership as an obligation of citizenship is no small task. The task of recruiting good leaders into political parties—and not just

Viewpoint

by Lyle Wray

those most skilled in fundraising or independently wealthy—and supporting such leaders once in office is daunting. So far, the signs do not look good.

Build a common vision. We should continue and deepen the vision-building process for the state begun in Minnesota Milestones. While the process produced 70-odd goals and while regular reports are issued, it has not caught on with our Legislature, our major counties or cities. Citizens are more willing to be led if they know the "big picture" game plan for the state and have participated actively in its formation. They need to be engaged in discussing the big issues as a blueprint for action and not simply "spin doctored" on stadiums or other "public funding du jour" special pleadings. Perhaps a majority of states in the Union are embarked on such vision processes.

Engage community leadership. We need to get smarter about drawing on the strengths of leadership in communities to address some of their challenges. Bureaucratic gears grinding away are unlikely to move ten thousand people from welfare to the workforce. New partnerships and community leadership to try new ways will be needed.

Business

We have heard a lot about globalization and the national and inter-

national pulls on larger firms. More firms face more competitive pressures. There is a perception of less "place-based loyalty" to our community. Time is at a premium and loaning the time of senior people to the "public good" tends to fall precipitously on the "to do list."

Make room for public leadership in the firm. The case needs to be made again that making the community a better place still benefits individual firms in the new era. We need to encourage firms to make a place for those involved in the other two sectors.

Broaden leadership training programs. Programs such as chamber leadership programs could be refocused to help develop regional community. Media could be encouraged to feature acts of leadership courage and not just horse races and scandals.

Nonprofit/civic sector

The civic sector is doing its best to prepare for the tidal wave of change in the wake of recent federal welfare-reform legislation. There is a real prospect of massively increased demand for services, with few new resources. The devolution realities, although significant, only add to other massive changes—in the demography of those needing services and assistance and in new technology and new strategies for delivering services.

Robert Putnam of Harvard has spoken eloquently of disengagement from civic society and has pinned a lot of the blame on television. We need to work to specifically counteract some of these influences.

Engage citizens in meaningful public participation processes.

We need to find new ways to connect citizens to government decisions that go beyond the usual public hearings, where officials either outnumber the citizens or are confronted by an angry mob. For instance, we should involve regular people in discussing regional growth options. Techniques like community visual preference surveys can help build the so far elusive consensus for more compact, efficient development.

Build inclusive boards. The Minneapolis Initiative Against Racism has spoken of the need to ensure that our nonprofit boards look more like the communities they serve. While progress has been made, much remains to be done to build boards that are inclusive.

We need vision and "how-to" knowledge from formal and informal leaders to meet our challenges. In the coming months the Citizens League will be identifying three to five issues that we can take on to help build this capacity. We need to draw up a blueprint of how to strengthen public leadership in our region and state and make it a top priority for the final years of this century.

Lyle Wray is executive director of the Citizens League.

Editors find plenty to chew on in Carlson school plan

Fergus Falls Daily Journal called (Dec. 6) the concept in Gov. Arne Carlson's education

plan of redesigning the education system around the students and not the provider "exciting" and said the plan bears consideration. **Mankato Free Press** said (Dec. 5) Carlson's plan needs more study by legislators to ensure that it's not "just a voucher plan in disguise." **Rochester Post-Bulletin** called (Dec. 6) Carlson's plan "a kinder, gentler approach to reforming Minnesota's public schools." The paper supported use of standardized tests and reporting those results for each school, expanding the use of computers in the classroom and encouraging charter schools, although it said establishing such schools by state authority without consent of local school districts "goes against the policy of local control." It said Carlson was right to stop "bashing the whole public school system" and "offer his ideas in a more conciliatory fashion."

Fargo Forum called (Dec. 9) Carlson's plan "a mixed bag of visionary incentives for academic achievement and deceptive attempts to use public money to fund private schools. It endorsed Carlson's support for statewide testing, funding for technological advances and teacher training. But it called his plan to give parents of students attending public, private and home schools \$150 million in tax credits "simply an attempt by

The Minnesota Journal

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On Balance

A blizzard of opinions to cure cabin fever.

Carlson to disguise a school voucher plan...Public tax money should not be used to support private schools." **St. Paul Pioneer Press** said (Dec. 5) the plan is "a provocative jumping off place for a discussion of how best to expand educational choices and improve student achievement." It said the most significant element of the plan may be Carlson's proposal to target \$50 million to site-based management in schools. **Star Tribune** said (Dec. 5) moving more decisions to the school site is "an approach fraught with both opportunity and peril. At best, each school becomes almost independent, increasing teacher and parent involvement. At worst, local decisions are made by those who show up." It said the governor's tax credit plan raises a number of questions.

St. Cloud Times said (Dec. 13) Minnesota's charter school movement has "slowed to a crawl." It endorsed a proposal by Sen. Ember Reichgott Junge (DFL-New Hope) to strengthen the state's charter law and provide assistance to new charter schools. **Duluth News-Tribune** endorsed (Dec. 19) the Duluth school board's vote to establish

two charter schools and criticized teachers who are trying to block one of the schools. "These teachers should see charters as an opportunity rather than a threat."

St. Cloud Times encouraged (Dec. 15) proposals to revive laboratory schools, cooperative ventures between colleges and school districts, "as places where innovative educational ideas could be developed, tested and taught."

Duluth News-Tribune said (Dec. 20) opposition to a plan for housing and a golf course along lake Superior in Superior raises the issue of balancing a high quality of life and a strong economy. "If we allow ourselves to find all waterfront development offensive and all use of undeveloped lands unacceptable, we will undercut the economic base that allows us to enjoy those qualities." **Red Wing Republican Eagle** said (Dec. 4) Red Wing must keep an open mind regarding business development, especially in the Highway 61 corridor on the western edge of town.

Star Tribune said (Dec. 16) that the Metropolitan Council's new growth strategy, while "fairly strin-

gent in the amount of further outward expansion it would allow," gives no indication of the political will needed to make it stick. The paper called for a statewide land-use planning law to set growth controls outside the seven-county metro area and said the Metro Council should push for such measures at the Legislature.

Pioneer Press called on (Jan. 3) Washington County to figure out a way to make cluster housing a reality, perhaps through one of three options under consideration: mandatory clustering in the eight townships under the county's jurisdiction; incentives to developers and landowners to propose cluster housing; mandatory clustering for portions of townships with distinctive natural features, such as rivers, lakes and parks.

St. Cloud Times supported (Dec. 11) a proposal by Rep. Joe Opatz (DFL-St. Cloud) to provide state funds for a local process to hammer out details on a regional planning structure. It said (Dec. 22) organizations that have submitted three draft bills dealing with planning in the St. Cloud area need to settle on a single plan that all can support. "Competition is a sure formula for killing the opportunity of regional jurisdictions to develop their own plan for orderly development."

Metro Council may need more control

Edited excerpts of remarks by Gary Laurent, president, Laurent Builders, to the Citizens League on Dec. 13.

The Metropolitan Council finds itself in an interesting and maybe even precarious situation. Over the last couple of decades they've been able to go to local governments and say, If you don't conform to what we think is best for the region, then we're not going to grant you MUSA extensions, we're not going to let you have sewer, we're not going to let you grow.

Things are changing rapidly out there right now. A lot of cities are saying, We don't care if we grow. Other cities are saying, We don't want to grow anyway. Their con-

stituents are telling them, We don't want to grow. We don't want development happening in our neighborhoods.

That took away a big tool of the Metropolitan Council. I find myself as a builder/developer exploring ideas that a year-and-a-half or two years ago would have just made me shiver. The idea of giving more control to the Metropolitan Council is something developers have not wanted to do and somebody from a local city would not have wanted to do.

But we find ourselves as a region where we've invested a huge amount of money into sewer treatment plants, sewer interceptors. They're going to specific places

that were planned and designed for growth. Now if those areas decide not to grow, we've just wasted a lot of money. And we still have 330,000 households that have to go someplace. And we'd have to reinvest for them to live someplace else. I think that would be a difficult thing for us to do.

I believe that we need to have local control and that decisions are best made at the local level. But maybe there should be consequences for the decisions. If a city is designed to accommodate—and we've already, as a region, paid infrastructure for it to hold—8,000 units and they decide they only want 3,000 units in their city, maybe they should be reimbursing the rest of the region in some way.

Regional view of jobs can help redevelop inner city

Edited excerpts of remarks by Matthew Ramadan, executive director, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council, to the Citizens League on Dec. 13.

For every one job created in the city of Minneapolis, 40 are being created in the suburbs.

You have jobs paying \$8, \$10, \$12 an hour. That would be great for a person just coming off welfare, but for a person who is paying \$125,000, \$250,000 for a home out

in the western, southern or northern suburbs, they can't afford to take that job.

If we can encourage at least 100 people a year that live in the inner city to travel the exact same distance to Plymouth, to Buffalo as the person from Plymouth or Buffalo is traveling to come into Minneapolis to take the jobs that are in the factories, to take the jobs in the light industry that are paying \$8 to \$12... Eight dollars an hour is \$16,000 a year. If 100 people leave welfare to

work at that dollar amount, that's \$1.6 million coming back into the neighborhood each year.

That's money to buy the houses—like the Habitat houses—that are being sold for 25-30-40-50 thousand dollars. Two of those working adults can afford to buy that house that's selling in our neighborhood now for \$90,000 to \$100,000 and rebuild the inner city with no extra cost to any other part of the region.

I deal with many young people in

the inner city who have heard over and over and over again that there is no hope, there is no opportunity, there are no jobs.

Well, there are no jobs on this block. There are jobs in this region. It's exactly the same distance for a person to go from Plymouth to downtown Minneapolis as it is to go from downtown Minneapolis to Plymouth. You just have to have the same attitude that I have to travel some distance and I will be able to get my needs fulfilled.

Open space

Continued from page 1

lead to flooding, erosion and groundwater problems. On a smaller scale, urbanization can contribute significantly to the degradation of our streams and lakes by being a source of many types of pollutants.

Urbanization introduces impervious surfaces, which prevent or greatly reduce the chance for water to infiltrate into the ground. This forces more of the water to stay on the surface, flowing through our stormwater systems into streams and lakes. These impervious surfaces, over time, collect phosphorous-rich dust, nitrogen from acid rain, various chemicals linked with our use of cars, animal droppings, fertilizers and pesticides, construction debris and more. With a heavy rain all of this is flushed into our streams and lakes. This is one of the reasons why runoff from urban areas is the largest source of water pollution in the nation.

Active farmland has its own associated environmental problems, such as soil erosion, groundwater and surface water contamination and habitat destruction.

By developing land we reduce the amount of natural space left over for other species to utilize. The result is a decrease in both the number of species and the number of individuals of those species which survive, as well as their resiliency. Species dependent on a certain size of habitat will go extinct or be extirpated if their habitat becomes smaller than this minimum requirement. Known as the area effect, this is an important issue for urban open spaces, because most preserved open spaces are too small to prevent

the loss of many species of animals. In some cases, the impact of a lost species can be exacerbated, because a second species may also be eliminated if it is dependent on the first.

It should also be noted that the maintenance of converted systems (cropland, household yards, golf course, etc.) relies on the input of fertilizers, pesticides and, in many cases, groundwater, all of which may have a detrimental effect on the environment.

Development also affects the natural spaces that are left intact. As land is developed, the remaining natural spaces are fragmented into smaller and more isolated patches. These patches fundamentally change how natural systems function. Changes to habitats, especially the relatively fast changes brought about by human development, affect the ability of species to survive.

There are two major aspects of habitat fragmentation: edge effect and patch isolation. Edge habitat is the area of transition between two types of land cover, such as

In many cases, fragmented patches of open space have left animals and plants isolated from other appropriate habitat and other members of their species. While some species can and do travel between isolated patches, others cannot. The converted landform between patches becomes a barrier to potential mates as development continues and distance between patches becomes greater and greater. With this widening gap between patches, wildlife finds it increasingly more difficult to travel between patches. Without access to "outside" individuals, inbreeding within species occurs, increasing the chance that the species will decline over time. Once fragmentation from development occurs, the effects are permanent, because the converted land type stays that way.

Rural development decreases the ability of species to adapt to changes in their environment. As the populations of species decline, either from problems associated with the edge effect, being isolated or both, their genetic diversity declines as well, reducing their abil-

level, the Metropolitan Council has two criteria for funding open space acquisition: (1) acreage—minimum of 100 acres; and (2) biodiversity—unique landscape types that represent pre-European settlement vegetation types. While the Metropolitan Council's open space agenda is to preserve natural systems, it does not appear that the council is trying to manage functioning ecosystems by linking open spaces into an across-scale network.

This across-scale integration of open spaces is vital, because some ecological processes do not occur at the local or patch level, but at the larger landscape level. An example would be the movement of large carnivores or the migration of neotropical birds. These movements are dependent on a landscape level network of open spaces. These types of processes, therefore, must be planned for at the landscape level. The difficult part is that this plan is the result of the cumulative efforts of many local governments' actions.

The fundamental problem of the current open space system in the metropolitan area is one of connectivity. There is, then, a need for a strong coordinating role to ensure that the pieces fit into and result in a functional whole. At the present time this does not seem to be any one agency's responsibility. An extensive open space system would help ensure the necessary connectivity between open spaces.

It should be noted that the metropolitan regional office of the state Department of Natural Resources has begun an effort in this area. They have developed draft maps of an extensive open space system. However, it will be important to include the Metropolitan Council and representatives of local government units in the process and, certainly, in the implementation.

Tom Lewanski is a doctoral student in the Public Administration Program at Hamline University. This article is adapted from an April 1996 report on the role of open spaces in the Twin Cities area prepared by Lewanski and fellow Hamline students Renee DiVicino and Kim Field. The report was prepared in a master's program class as background information for the Citizens League's Livable Communities Committee. The League plans to issue its Livable Communities report in February.

Little, if any, joint open space planning takes place among local units of government. At the regional

Schools

Continued from page 1

learn. If they do not change, there is not much the state can do. "I can stand in the Capitol and say to one of the pillars, 'Pillar, move,' the late Gov. Rudy Perpich used to say to associates. "But that won't make the pillar move."

So in the late 1980s the state began making some changes intended to introduce dynamics for improvement, intended to "give the districts a reason" to improve, as Dan Loritz, Perpich's former deputy chief of staff, likes to say. It quickly became clear, however, that choice among districts (open enrollment) was not enough. There had to be more choices: more good, new programs for kids to choose among. Which means: schools.

So, now:

- There's been a big effort to develop new school designs—"break-the-mold" schools—and to get these into use. The business-supported organization called New American Schools, stimulated by President Bush, will spend \$120 million on this effort. Millions more have been spent on Sizer schools, Comer schools, Accelerated Schools, Edison schools and other designs.

- In Minnesota Gov. Carlson is moving the "performance" discussion toward schools, proposing that performance targets be set by school, that results of a new statewide test be reported by school (site), that there be merit pay for school improvement and that an existing school control its money and its staff if the school feels it's ready.

- The charter schools legislation, which makes it possible for teachers and others to start new public schools using the best designs they can find (and which requires them to be accountable for performance), is expanding across the country. Minnesota's charter program, the first when enacted in 1991, has since been overshadowed by larger, stronger programs elsewhere. Gov. Carlson and Sen. Ember Reichgott Junge (DFL-New Hope) will have major and substantially similar proposals to move the pro-

gram ahead here this year.

- Interest is growing in letting existing schools manage their own affairs. Two leading exponents of a school-based (rather than a district-based) system of education finance have been in Minnesota this past year. Allan Odden of the University of Wisconsin has been talking both with Gov. Carlson and with legislators. Michael Strembitsky, who got money flowing directly into the schools while superintendent in Edmonton, Alberta, has been brought in by Carlson—and, interestingly, by the Minnesota School Boards Association for a session with board members, superintendents and union officials January 7.

District interests

The major education groups are fighting hard to preserve "the district," however.

- The school boards' association, the superintendents' association and the two teacher unions are working tightly together to coordinate their legislative programs, to

"If public education is to survive, boards and superintendents need to be in the policy business...Principals and teachers can run the schools."

avoid internal conflicts and to put on programs and do research jointly. The superintendents' association will not push its usual agenda for changes in the bargaining law this year, for example. "We need the teachers: Why irritate 'em?" was the reasoning.

- They want cuts in financing restored "without strings." The message that comes across to legislators is: "Give us the money and leave us alone!"

- Some represent charter and contract schools as "a threat to public education," though what they threaten is really the district—public-utility—model of public education that does not have to improve if it does not want to.

- District interests give rhetorical support to the idea of school-based decision-making. Superintendents often say, "We're doing it." But in

"We need to submit a proposal to the Legislature that gives our schools more responsibility and power to govern their own affairs without actually doing so."



May '95, when then-Sen. Gene Merriam's bill was up for discussion, they pleaded with legislators not to make it real: "We're not ready."

There is a powerful desire to hold onto central control. "If we let other people make decisions, some of those decisions will be wrong, and how can we permit that?" a superintendent asked at a meeting on site management some years back. Others interpret the appoint-

there is far too much emphasis on process, on control, on uniformity; too much micromanagement, too much private interest. Far too little innovation; far too little responsiveness. And far too little accountability. Running the schools makes district people feel accountable for results. No wonder standards, measurement and sanctions for low performance are slow to appear.

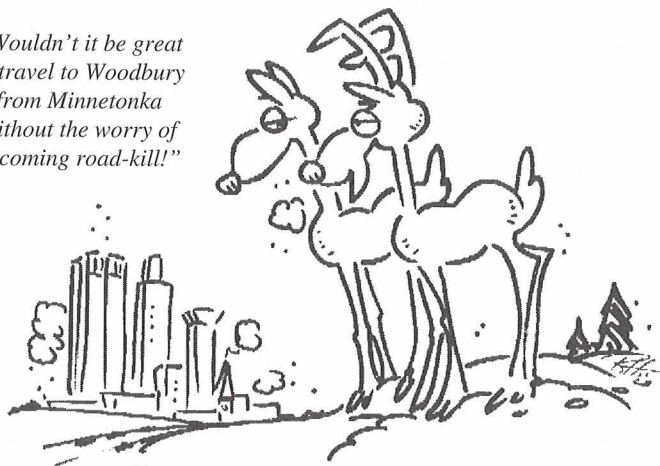
Trying to hold onto the centralist model is what will kill public education. Events in other big cities make it clear the end of that road is bankruptcy and trusteeship: Newark, Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, Washington, D.C., Baltimore; perhaps others.

If public education is to survive, boards and superintendents need to be in the policy business: setting performance targets, deciding how much to spend, selecting the organizations to run learning programs, measuring performance, enforcing consequences. Principals and teachers can run the schools, buying services from the district (or others) if they wish. "A system of schools," as former Milwaukee superintendent Howard Fuller likes to say, rather than "a school system;" a network of learning opportunities in a community, not one central corporation.

This is one of those changes, though, that probably cannot be "agreed." It will have to be "imposed," by legislators who see that the public interest—and the state's interest—is with the learning in the schools, rather than with the adult interests in the districts.

Ted Kolderie is contributing editor of the Minnesota Journal.

"Wouldn't it be great to travel to Woodbury from Minnetonka without the worry of becoming road-kill!"



Metro Council growth plan is ‘solid middle ground’

Edited excerpts of remarks by Curtis Johnson, chair, Metropolitan Council, to the Citizens League on Dec. 17.

The Metropolitan Council growth plan is a solid middle ground between those whose sentimental preference would be to try to throw the walls out and to try to concentrate all of the growth into the already developed area and folks who just want to lay down the fences and let everything go wherever it may go.

This is a plan that would do several things:

● First, it would establish for the first time ever an actual, ultimate urban limit. You could put a line on a map and say, At the end of the next 40 years, this is still where the fence should be. If we can do that and make it stick, we will have the opportunity for more clarity about where the open space is going to be, what’s going to be permanently agricultural. We will also have some shot at ending the distortion around land prices that tends to hover around more dynamic, moveable MUSA lines.

● Secondly, we would establish, through negotiation with each of the 189 communities that make up this region, a 2020 MUSA line. In other words, we would negotiate how each community can handle an appropriate share of the 330,000 new households we know we’re going to get, without eating up all the territory between today’s MUSA line and that ultimate growth boundary. This territory we

tend to call “urban preserves” and it isn’t really preserves if we just let it get consumed by unconstrained market forces in the first two decades we’re looking at.

The third thing that’s in this plan is a serious effort to reinvest in the built-up areas. The Metro Council has relatively few direct tools with which to do this. One that we’ve been using in the last year or two now, under the Livable Communities Act, is a steady investment in brownfield cleanup. We have \$6 or \$7 million a year, which is more than most regions in America have and more than we ever had before,

“The Council may have, today, all the tools it really needs to keep this partnership conversation going.”

to leverage state and federal money to clean up polluted sites and make them insurable and suitable for people to do business there.

● The last thing we propose is to try something that is conceptually different in transit: to redefine the problem as one of a need to plan to have corridors that are permanently dedicated to the opportunity for transit. What we would propose to do is to create a network of transitways. Set aside the argument about technology and vehicles and in the near term plan to put the buses on a very urban kind of corridor. Perhaps, as a policy matter, let taxis on, too. Make sure it’s not just carpooling. It’s not another HOV lane. It’s a corridor on which only transit

vehicles can ride.

We think that if there is a conspicuous public commitment to corridors that are dedicated to transit that will change the development incentives. It will cause some of the same things that people claim for rail, that it is different from simply a bus route or a scheduled transit stop. It is something that is a permanent public investment in the opportunity for transit.

For those who think there is rail in our future, nothing about this strategy precludes that. If you have enough ridership, enough revenue,

muting characteristics.

We’ve taken the position that almost anything the Metro Council could do or say by way of initiating this looks hopelessly self-aggrandizing, looks like the first step toward sweeping more counties into our orbit. It’s hard for us to see how politically we get by with that.

The Council may have, today, all the tools it really needs with the communities that make up the seven-county metropolitan area. It might be a mistake to load us up with more authority than we have the diplomatic capacity to carry out.

We already have the authority to request and to approve environmental and comprehensive plans. We’re setting off a new round of those. We’ll have the kind of conversation going with these communities that I think will cause them to participate in the regional interest. Then the questions will come: At what point will the regional governance body, if ever, stand up to any community and say, Sorry, that’s not good enough; go back and do it again?

At what point will we make any kind of confrontation or standoff a sufficiently public, important cause celebre that we find out whether the regional interest can, in fact, be asserted if somebody decides that they’re just not going to participate? I think you’re looking at a group of Council members who are as likely to do that, if it’s the right cause at the right time. We don’t think we have anything to lose by figuring out the right thing to do.

enough political will converging, all you have to do is put the rails down and the wires overhead and order new rolling stock.

Most of the reaction to this has been, Pretty good, but how are you really going to pull that off? There’s a lot of hand wringing and teeth gnashing and overall worry about the effect of those in the counties beyond the seven counties on any kind of strategy. Some people argue that this means we’ve got to have statewide planning. Other people retreat from that a little bit and say, Maybe not statewide and maybe not for everybody, but you need a requirement to plan that falls on communities that reach some threshold of size and, maybe, com-

ings into St. Cloud. Court is held every day in Foley, with as many as three or four judges a day at the courthouse.

Currently the county has one large courtroom and a small room for hearings. There is no security for prisoners and people can hear through the walls. The new facility would have two large courtrooms and one smaller one for hearings. It would also house the court administrator, the county attorney and probation officers.

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Benton Co.

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The county began occupying its jail in November. The facility held 71 inmates, which can be increased to 96 by adding bunks. The old jail facilities only had four cells, forcing the county to rent jail space from Morrison County and other counties and to transport prisoners back and forth.

Now Benton County is renting out its excess jail space to other counties—including neighboring Sherburne and Stearns, which are both looking at expanding their own courts and jail facilities. The state may also be interested in leasing space in the jail. Speak said the county hopes that the jail space rental will generate enough money to pay off the bonds on the new courts facility.

While Speak said some people would like to see the courts facility built in Sauk Rapids, the problem is that “once you built the jail facility, you almost needed to build the court facility here (in Foley)...The horse is out of the barn.” The jail location “helped out Foley economically,” Speak said. The new jail has created 25 new jobs.

Speak said county officials are looking at new ways of doing things. Benton County currently has a satellite office for probation services in the Sauk Rapids city hall. “Maybe we will need satellite facilities for human services, public health and other services,” he said. And four area counties—Wright, Sherburne, Benton and Stearns—will meet for a Quad County summit on Jan. 27 to discuss common issues.

But Benton County Commissioner Duane Walter of Foley is less optimistic about the potential for counties and municipalities to work together regionally. “What’s good for one county might not be good for another county,” he said. “It’s better to have things more decentralized.” He wants the decision on the courts facility to be put to a referendum and said it would be a mistake to build the facility anywhere but next to the jail.

Sauk Rapids City Administrator Bob Haarman said county services

don’t affect most people in Sauk Rapids, unless they are in the welfare or court systems. People who need services like getting a license don’t care what county they go to, so they generally go across the river to the Stearns County offices in St. Cloud.

But the location of the jail is “something of an issue” with Sauk Rapids police officers, who are “running to Foley,” he said. “It would be nice if the jail were here. Logically, we could have had the court facilities here, too. But nothing says county and state government has to be efficient.”

Haarman said dealing with growth in the St. Cloud area is a problem that possibly should be dealt with by forming one large county. “A lot of government is not in sync with the ‘90s,” he said. “We’re living with state laws that go back to the 19th century...The state needs

that would have grouped Minnesota’s 87 counties into 19 districts, in which counties would be forced to cooperate in planning and providing services to achieve economies and efficiency. His bill, he said, received “a furious reaction,” but he intends to introduce a similar, stronger bill this session that would hold back state aids to counties unless they combine. He is skeptical of joint powers agreements and thinks county consolidations would work better.

But not everyone agrees that county consolidation is the answer. Association of Minnesota Counties Executive Director Jim Mulder said there is no “magic bullet” that says one size is better than another for counties. Different services have different economies of scale, he said.

“Decisions should be driven at the local level,” he said. “Each deci-

“A lot of government is not in sync with the ‘90s.” —Sauk Rapids City Administrator Bob Haarman

to look at the whole structure of county government. Counties are extensions of state government and it’s not surprising that things happen the way they do. If we’re concerned about regionalism, we need to start restructuring government. The structure is underlying many problems.”

Rep. Dave Bishop (R-Rochester) agrees. He introduced a bill in 1993

sion should be judged on its own merit.” He conceded that the Legislature needs to give counties more flexibility in determining where county facilities should be located.

He said many county joint powers arrangements have been very successful, whether for waste management, public health or other services. “It’s more flexible,” he said. “You can do it for a single issue.”

He said counties are also very interested in the use of field offices and new technology to increase people’s access to services.

A report on county consolidation to be released later this month by the state Board of Government Innovation and Cooperation concludes that if county consolidation makes sense, the decision should come from the local level, not from the state. According to the board’s executive director, Jim Gelbmann, counties should be allowed to consolidate services where it makes sense, such as in human services or transportation. It may make sense to keep other services, such as property tax records and payments, closer to people, he said.

Gelbmann said disparities in wage scales among counties could make consolidations expensive, since wages tend to be driven up to the highest pay scales during such mergers. “That will eliminate any efficiency savings,” he said.

Gelbmann acknowledged that there are “a lot of petty turf battles to be overcome, a lot of historical rivalries to be overcome. These are standing in the way of efficiency.” But compared with 10 years ago, more counties are being forced by economic realities to realize that “the only way to accomplish their goals is to put aside turf battles and eliminate needless duplication.”

In the case of Benton County, Gelbmann said a multicounty jail and courts facility would have been “a more efficient way to go.” He noted that the Board of Innovation funded a project in McLeod County that encouraged the county, the city of Hutchinson and the state—all of which were considering building new highway maintenance facilities near Hutchinson—to build one joint facility. The jurisdictions share hoists, loaders and salt and sand piles at the joint facility.

“We’re hoping the joint facility is only the first step,” Gelbmann said. “We’re hoping people will realize, ‘Does it really matter who plows my street in Hutchinson?’ and look at shared services, as well.”

Dana Schroeder is editor of the Minnesota Journal.

Benton Co.

Continued from page 1

“A cooperative arrangement with Stearns County for joint jail and court facilities would have been the most efficient course; a second choice would have been a separate Benton jail and court facility in Sauk Rapids,” the paper said.

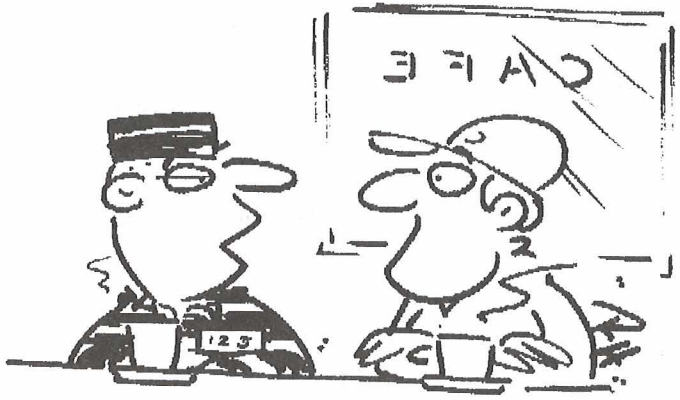
Stearns and Benton Counties considered, but rejected, a joint facility about 10 years ago. “It was a mistake for both,” the Times said.

“Across Minnesota...population centers have shifted and traditional county seats are not always the best locations for the most efficient delivery of county government services...In a changing society...more and more taxpayers will need to make explicit choices between preserving tradition, at a price, and efficiency.”

Times editorial page editor Pia Lopez said there is tension between Sauk Rapids and Foley over the siting of county facilities. Sauk Rapids is growing rapidly and

attracting new jobs, while in Foley “the only industry is government.” The decision to build the county’s new jail in Foley means that prisoners on work release programs end up sleeping in Foley and commuting 15 miles into the St. Cloud area to work during the day, she said.

Benton County Administrator Rick Speak said growth in the area has led to an increase in crime and prisoners. The county has been told by the district judge that if it doesn’t break ground on a new facility by July, he will move court proceed-



“Actually, I live in Foley. I just commute to the St. Cloud-Sauk Rapids area for work!”

One-third of new migrants to state from other countries

Minnesota melting pot? In 1995, the state's 0.93 growth rate was slightly higher than the national average of 0.91. Neighboring states saw considerably slower growth levels, including Wisconsin (0.74 percent), Iowa (0.31 percent), South Dakota (0.4 percent) and North Dakota (0.32 percent). In fact, since 1990, Minnesota's cumulative growth rate of 6.45 percent is the strongest of any Northeastern or Midwestern state.

Admittedly, much of this growth is due to a healthy birth rate. However, Minnesota Planning noted that for the first time since early this century, migration has contributed significantly and steadily to the state's population—about 100,000 people in all since 1990, one-third of them from other countries.

—Ron Wirtz.

Recent charges by Minneapolis officials of "raiding" in Lawson Software's apparent decision to move from Minneapolis to St. Paul echo debates that have taken place across the country about "smoke-stack chasing" among states. In an article in the Nov. 1996 issue of *Governing*, Charles Mahtesian commented, "Governors really do hate smokestack chasing. The only trouble is, they can't stop doing it."

Ditto, apparently, for mayors: Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton reportedly told Lawson that Minneapolis could improve on any financial incentives offered by St. Paul.

What to do to stop the border wars? Addressing the competition among states, a report two years ago by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis urged Congress to exercise its regulatory authority over interstate commerce to end the business-recruiting war. In May the Republican-controlled Ohio Senate called on Congress to eliminate federally funded programs currently used to lure businesses from other states. And Maryland recently enacted a job-creation tax credit bill but directed the governor to negotiate an agreement with his counterparts in surrounding states that would kill the subsidy by July 1998.

On the local level? Perhaps Mahtesian's suggestion (actually aimed at states, but applicable to municipali-

ties) for mandating full public disclosure of development incentives and tax expenditures might stir up enough public interest to put some brakes on the nab-a-business competition.—*Dana Schroeder.*

With the changes in the welfare law, requiring work, some hard thinking is under way about getting central-city residents access to jobs. But it's tough to get lots of new jobs into the city. And tough to get lots of low-income housing in the suburbs. "An insoluble problem", somebody concluded in a meeting in Saint Paul recently.

Nonsense. Central-city investment and suburban low-income housing may (or may not) be "insoluble problems." But setting up a fleet of vehicles to get central-city residents out to jobs in the suburbs is no way an insoluble problem.—*Ted Kolderie.*

The number of occupations that require practitioners to be licensed jumped dramatically in Minnesota between 1968 and 1990, according to a new study by Humphrey Institute Professor Morris Kleiner and student Mitchell Gordon (*CURA Reporter*, Dec. 1996). But despite practitioners' claims that licensing protects consumers and improves the quality of services, the main beneficiaries of such regulations are the practitioners themselves, Kleiner and Gordon say.

Their review of the national research discovered that states with rigid occupational licensing requirements are also the most likely to have higher prices for the licensed services. Not surprisingly, practitioners in these states had incomes that were 10 to 20 percent higher than in less-regulated states.

The national research shows no net benefit to consumers, though. While the quality of service might improve—as measured in, say, a visit to an optometrist's office—higher prices prompt consumers to use less of the service, such as by putting off that eye exam for a year.

Take Note

"A man is of all sorts of luggage the most difficult to be transported."
—A. Smith

Kleiner and Gordon speculate that growth in occupational licensing occurs because practitioners have much to gain by licensing, so they're motivated to organize and lobby for such regulations. Meanwhile, the cost to any individual consumer is small enough that it's not likely to be noticed.

Kleiner's colleague John Brandl once referred to this process as "dishing out benefits to the organized grateful, while spreading the costs around among the oblivious."—*Janet Dudrow.*

A widening hole in the doughnut: While decaying conditions in Minneapolis and St. Paul grab most of the headlines, it appears that some first-ring suburbs are on the same crash course. A recent report by the Hennepin County Office of Planning and Development shows that numerous measures of community health have declined in first-ring suburbs.

For instance, since 1970, first-ring suburbs in Hennepin County have lost about 35,000 people. Meanwhile, from 1980 to 1990 poverty increased (from 3.8 to 5.1 percent), and the percentage of students receiving free and reduced school lunch almost doubled. The real kicker, however, might be that median household income has dropped in real terms by more than six percent since 1980 and residential property values have dropped almost four percent in the last 10 years.—*R. W.*

For the first time in recent memory, the Minnesota Chamber has weighed in on the K-12 education debate, adding an education reform initiative to its 1997 legislative agenda consistent with Gov. Arne Carlson's proposals. It calls for uniform guidelines for statewide testing, reforming teacher certification requirements, implementing merit pay for teachers and schools, expanding the role of charter schools, expanding public school choice, providing funds directly to K-12 students to enable them to attend the public or private school of their choice and expanding school-to-work options.—*D.S.*

Many Minnesota policy wonks have become familiar over the years with the concept of "pupil units" used to compute state education aid. Not to be outdone, the state Pollution Control Agency, in a new draft pollution-elimination policy, has created a weighting system for animals, presumably reflecting differences in various animals'... ahem...waste production: one steer equals one "animal unit," one finishing hog, 0.4; one dairy cow, 1.4.

We could only imagine the empirical research the unfortunate policy analyst had to conduct in order to whip up those weighting factors. We also couldn't help noticing how eerily similar the figures were to the pupil-weighting factors in the school-aid formula: each kindergarten is 0.53 pupil units, each first through sixth grader is 1.06 and each seventh through 12th grader is 1.3.—*J.D.*

Contributors to "Take Note" include Citizens League and Minnesota Journal staff members.

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Citizens League Matters

January 21, 1997

News for Citizens League Members

Welcome New Members

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Walt Fehst
Ted Ferrara
David Foster
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Bruce A. Peterson
Stephen Rathke
Sarah Stoesz
David Strand
Steve Suckow
Josh C. Zepnick
Holly Ziemer

Thank you recruiters:

Mike Christenson, Jim
Dorsey, Dave Hutcheson.

Citizens League

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The Citizens League promotes the public interest in Minnesota by involving citizens in identifying and framing critical public policy choices, forging recommendations and advocating their adoption. Suggested dues for membership are \$50 for individuals and \$75 for families. For more information, please call 338-0791.

Building Livable Communities Committee tops off

What makes a community a home? A Citizens League study committee has painted a picture of a "livable city" and outlined principles to help guide the growing Twin Cities region toward that ideal.

The Building Livable Communities committee, co-chaired by Don Fraser and Sally Evert, finished its report on January 2 after 51 meetings and 15 months of work. The League's Board of Directors will discuss the report on January 15.

The Twin Cities metropolitan region has grown rapidly—both in population and size—since 1970. But there is even more explosive growth ahead. According to the Metropolitan Council, the seven-county region will add 330,000 households by the year 2020. More new households will be added in the next 25 years than were added in the last 25.

The League Board of Directors asked the study committee to identify the public policies behind current development patterns, and to look at how urban, suburban and exurban communities have been affected.

The committee debated whether the policies that have shaped the Twin Cities' urban landscape should continue. And if not, what policy changes are needed to guide future growth of the metropolitan area.

During the final months of deliberations, the committee's findings and conclusions were shared with a variety of individuals and organizations. The League asked for reactions to the committee's work, and invited ideas about how to solve some of the problems relating to urban growth.

Approximately 36 people representing a broad cross-section of organizations participated in five outreach Speak Ups!. Several organizations helped the League convene these Speak Ups! (Acknowledgement on this list does not imply the endorsement of the final report or its recommendations.):

Builders Association of the
Twin Cities
Minneapolis Consortium of

Non-Profit Developers
Habitat for Humanity
Norwest Bank
People of Phillips

The Citizens League also conducted four Speak Ups! in June 1996 to give members a chance to critique the committee's findings and conclusions.

Approximately 45 Citizens League members participated in these meetings. The League gratefully thanks the hosts and moderators for facilitating these discussions with Citizens League members:

<u>Hosts</u>	<u>Moderators</u>
Kent Eklund	Sally Evert
Schef Lang	Dan Hunt
John Richter	Linda Ewen
Ann C. Smith	Fred Hoisington

In addition to co-chairs Sally Evert and Don Fraser, active members of the committee included:

John Adams	Dave Hutcheson	Patrick O'Leary
Russ Adams	Jim Jorgenson	Ed Oliver
Alan Anderson	Gary Joselyn	Randy Peterson
Patrick Boylan	Margaret Kirkpatrick	Philip Raup
Scott Carlson	John Knutson	John Richter
Walter Carpenter	Paul Kuettel	Peter Rozga
Erv Chorn	A. Scheffer Lang	Steve Schenck
Pat Cragoe	Adeel Lari	Randy Schubring
Bob de la Vega	Raeder Larson	Warner Shippee
Dan Dobbert	Charles Lutz	Erika Sitz
Ken Dols	Dick Little	Melenie Soucheray
Linda Ewen	Mark Lystig	Eileen Troseth
Hugh Faville	Sue Matthews	Barbara VanDrasek
Sandy Hale	MaryAnn McCoy	John Wells
Michael Hohmann	Thomas Moore	Alice Wilcox
Fred Hoisington	Jim Myott	Paul Zerby
Dan Hunt	Bruce Nawrocki	

Mind-Openers focus on prospects for property tax reform

A projected surplus, a non-election year, pledges of less partisan bickering, a Governor who is not running for re-election—to many observers these conditions describe an ideal climate for a major overhaul of the state's property tax system.

Yet despite what appears to be a favorable climate, prospects for reform seem to be running into legislative storm clouds. Part of

the discouraging word comes from wide disagreement about what "reform" means.

The Mind-Opener series will look at the meaning of reform and consider the prospects for change. The three breakfast meetings will look at various interpretations of reform. The series will conclude with a special afternoon panel discussion, moderated by George Latimer,

which features major legislative players discussing the opportunities for reform and the political obstacles that must be overcome.

Please note the different times and days for this series. Cost for members is \$10 and \$15 for non-members. All the meetings are at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, St. Paul. To register or for more information, please call 338-0791.

Tuesday, January 21
7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

Dan Salomone, executive director, Minnesota Taxpayers Association, will provide an overview of the property tax system and past reform efforts.

Thursday, January 23
7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

Bill Blazar, senior vice president, Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, will discuss the need for tax reform and a Chamber proposal.

Tuesday, January 28
7:30 - 8:30 a.m.

Mel Duncan, executive director, Minnesota Alliance for Progressive Action, will outline certain principles that should be embodied in property tax reform.

Tuesday, February 4
5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Sen. William Belanger, Jr. (Republican - Bloomington)
Sen. Steve Novak (DFL - New Brighton)
Rep. Bill Macklin (Republican - Lakeville)
Rep. Dee Long (DFL - Minneapolis)

Congratulations, Cal!

League Board member Cal Clark received the Distinguished Service Award from Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska. In accepting the honor, Clark challenged Chadron students with Winston Churchill's advice, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." Cal, who is spearheading the League endowment drive, certainly practices what he preaches.

Resource speakers impart their knowledge to study committee

Any successful Citizens League study committee depends on the cooperation of those people in the community who have special expertise on a subject. In fact, one of the great attractions of the League study committee process for many of the participants is the graduate school quality of the "instruction" provided by resource guests. The Building Livable Communities Committee was the recipient of the wisdom of 45 metropolitan leaders. Resource speakers were:

John Adams: professor of geography, planning and public affairs, University of Minnesota.

Michael Anderson: executive director, Metropolitan Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing.

Joe Barisonzi: executive coordinator, Lyndale Neighborhood Association.

Joanne Barron: senior planner, Metropolitan Council and director of the Livable Communities Demonstration Account.

Clint Blaiser: president/partner, Halverson and Blaiser Group.

Helen Boyer: director, Environmental Services Division, Metropolitan Council.

Karen Christofferson: director of municipal affairs, Builders Association of the Twin Cities.

Dan Comejo: development director, City of Robbinsdale.

Pat Dalton: legislative analyst, House Research.

Jon Elam: administrator, City of Maple Grove.

Paul Farmer: director of planning, City of Minneapolis.

Terry Forbord: vice president of land development, Lundgren Bros. Construction.

Hal Freshley: policy analyst, Metropolitan Council and director of Tax Base Revitalization Program.

Hans Hagen: president, Hans Hagen Homes.

Beth Halvorson: executive director, Regional Public Policy, U S West.

James Heltzer: executive director, Washington County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.

Dan Herbst: president and owner, Pentom Land Company.

Jim Hetland: inaugural chair, Metropolitan Council, former Citizens League president.

Steve Hinz: legislative analyst, House Research.

Carl Holmstrom: former superintendent, St. Louis Park Schools; board member for the Children First Initiative.

Curt Johnson: chair, Metropolitan Council.

Sharon Johnson: executive director, Community Action for Suburban Hennepin.

Tene Jones: director, Minneapolis Way To Grow.

Larry Laukka: president and owner, Laukka-Jarvis Inc.

Gary Laurent: former mayor, City of Shakopee; president, Laurent Builders, Inc.

John Kari: senior planner, Metropolitan Council.

David Long: senior planner, Metropolitan Council; director of Local Housing Incentives Program.

Judith Martin: professor of geography, University of Minnesota.

Jeanne Massey: director, South Hennepin Regional Planning Agency.

Bob Mazanec: planning analyst, Metropolitan Council.

Martha McMurry: senior research analyst, Minnesota Office of the State Demographer.

Senator Ted Mondale: DFL-St. Louis Park.

William Morrish: program director, Design Center for American Urban Landscape, University of Minnesota.

Michael Munson: senior planner, Metropolitan Council.

Rep. Myron Orfield: DFL-Minneapolis.

Carl Ohm: planning analyst, Metropolitan Council.

Matthew Ramadan: executive director, Northside Residents Redevelopment Council.

Rip Rapson: senior fellow, Design Center for American Urban Landscape, University of Minnesota; project director for the Community Connections Project.

Peggy Reichert: director of community development, City of Eagan.

Hazel Reinhardt: president, Hazel Reinhardt Consulting; founder of the Minnesota Office of the State Demographer.

Steve Schachtman: president, Steven Scott Management.

John Shardlow: president, Dahlgren Shardlow and Uban.

Bruce Steuernagel: research director, JOBS NOW Coalition.

Todd Stutz: president, Minnesota Division of Rotlund Homes.

Doug Tenpas: former mayor, City of Eden Prairie; partner, Tetrad Group.

Lyle Wray: executive director, Citizens League.