



THE EAST SIDE UNIFIED HOUSING JUSTICE JOURNAL

Published by the East Side Freedom Library

June 29, 2022

We welcome you to a new monthly update providing the East Side with the latest and juiciest news about the past, present, and future of housing justice in our community.

In this newsletter, you can discover untold stories of the East Side, learn about opportunities for activism, and find community resources.

East Side Housing Justice



In this Issue:

- Hamm's Brewery
- Community Land Trusts
- Community Feature:
- Housing Justice Community Resources
- Community Art by Zoe Quinn

Hamm's Brewery: A Cultural Icon and Current Conundrum



Street view of the Hamm's Brewery Building which currently houses St. Paul Brewing and 11 Wells Distillery. Image: David Joles/Star Tribune

by Bailey Ethier

Working class urban neighborhoods are under constant threat of gentrification and many face complex challenges after decades of unjust disinvestment. Housing is a pertinent issue throughout the city of St. Paul, and it is inextricable from the effects of impending urban reinvestment initiatives. These initiatives often bring new business and economic stimuli to communities, but they inevitably drive up housing prices and displace low-income residents.

In 2021, the U.S. Census revealed the Twin Cities as the metro region with the worst housing shortage in the nation. Subsequently, the Minnesota Financial Housing Agency (MN FHA) reported dismal predictions about the future of housing in the state. The agency estimates the state will experience a shortage

of over 40,000 homes needed to keep pace with population growth over the next five years.

The East Side of St. Paul is no exception to this trend. During the height of 3M, Whirlpool, and Hamm's manufacturing operations in the mid 20th Century, the East Side employed and housed over 10,000 unionized workers. When those companies ceased operations in Dayton's Bluff, the neighborhood endured a long period of economic decline. Following the corporations' departure, HUD subsidized white homeowners to move into newly constructed homes in the suburbs, and white flight ensued. In 1980 the East Side had a poverty rate under 20 percent; 40 years later that percentage has increased by over [10 percent](#). The St. Paul community demonstrated its concerns about rising poverty and housing affordability last election cycle with its rent stabilization initiative, which was highly favored by voters on the East Side. Today, Payne Avenue is receiving buzz about its potential as a rising arts district in the city. While it may seem appropriate to celebrate the introduction of numerous new businesses on the East Side, it is pertinent to note that the most distinctly gentrified neighborhoods in Minneapolis, Uptown and the North Loop, were also once viewed as nascent arts districts.

Just a few hundred feet off Payne, at 700 Minnehaha Avenue, is the historic building complex that once housed Hamm's Brewery. The existing buildings, which appear endearingly dilapidated on the exterior, cover around 165,000 square feet. This complex accounts for less than 15 percent of the 4.8 acre property. Currently, the property is under the control of the Minnesota Housing Redevelopment Authority (HRA). For decades, the City of St. Paul has debated the best use for the vacant property, attempting to preserve the integrity of the historic buildings and find an ethical use for the site in the context of its surroundings. Hamm's Brewery has played an integral role in the cultural and economic history of the East Side and the next designated use for the property will significantly shape the imminent future of the Dayton's Bluff community.

Around 1865, Theodore Hamm purchased a small brewery on the East Side of St Paul. Two decades later, Hamm's held the title of second largest brewery in the state. By manufacturing soda during Prohibition, the Hamm family was able to survive the federal ban on alcohol production. As one of the few breweries to outlast Prohibition, the family quickly became prominent public figures. Attention on the Hamm family was so significant in 1933 that a gang was inspired to kidnap William Hamm Jr. To secure William's safe return, the family paid the gang a ransom equivalent to \$1.8 million today.

Fortunately for the Hamm family, the ransom did not stifle their success as a business. Over the next two decades the brewery expanded to 20 acres and employed over 1,300 workers. The company purchased breweries across the country and Hamm's iconic advertising, "From the Land of Sky Blue Waters", was born. In 1968, the Hamm family sold its company and the business was passed around until the St. Paul location finally closed 30 years later. While the site is not yet listed on the National Registry of Historic Places, the Minnesota State Government claims it could be eligible.

Since the brewery closed its doors, the empty complex has been home to a handful of entrepreneurs. For a period of time, the complex housed the Twin Cities Trapeze Center, a hospital linen laundry, and aquaponics company Urban Organics. Because the buildings are not easily repurposed, the city has struggled to find appropriate occupants. Talk also circulated about the implementation of an \$18 million project to establish an Asian Pacific Cultural Center on the property, but the city was never able to secure the bonding money from the state.

Currently, 11 Wells Distillery and St. Paul Brewing are located in the Hamm's buildings. In 2013, St. Paul Brewing received \$375,000 in financial assistance from the government to complete the \$1.5 million project. The remaining funding was sourced from private financiers. Rob Clapp owns both St. Paul Brewing and Can Can Wonderland, an indoor mini golf and arcade entertainment facility. St. Paul Brewing has enjoyed praise for its whimsical patio and its instagram-friendly environment, but Clapp has a bigger vision for the property. In 2019, Clapp publicized his plan to transform the complex into an amusement center with ziplines, slides, and a ferris wheel. His proposal has not been approved by the city as its requirements for developers focuses heavily on community benefit.

In 2021, the HRA released a [request for proposal](#) (RFP) for the rehabilitation of the Hamm's site. Hamm's is designated as both a Federal Opportunity Zone and a Mixed-Use Opportunity Site, which allows for higher-density, mixed-use development, and flexible rezoning. The RFP requirements were shaped under the guidance of the [Swede Hollow Master Plan](#), St. Paul's [2040 Comprehensive Plan](#), the [Dayton's Bluff District Plan](#), and the 2004 [Hamm's Reuse Study and Vision Plan](#). In the RFP, the HRA calls for developers who will revitalize the buildings, maximize housing and jobs for the community, enhance neighborhood connectivity to public resources like Swede Hollow Park, and prioritize equitable outcomes in the development and use of the space. Five proposals were submitted before the first deadline, but the city has

not moved forward with any developers. The HRA is not actively taking RFPs in 2022, but the city is open to receiving proposals for properties at any time.

An array of community groups are in continual conversation about the future of Hamm's Brewery. Its undeveloped land coupled with its spacious vacant buildings present a daunting task for the city. While St. Paul has committed to a community-informed process in the development of the site; it must remain accountable to the residents who will be affected most by any decision regarding the property. The glaring need for additional affordable housing looms over potential developments of commercial sites on the East Side, and the displacement of local residents should be avoided at all costs. As new proposals come forth, residents must establish a strong collective voice in the decision-making process: ensuring a strategic, ethical, and collaborative approach to redevelopment in a historic immigrant community.

Community Land Trusts



Charles Sherrod and Randy Battle visit a supporter in the Georgia countryside, 1963. Image: Danny Lyon, *Memories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement*

by **Hilary Kaufman**

In 1961, Charles Sherrod, Civil Rights activist and reverend, came to Georgia to canvas for Black voter registration and stayed to develop America's first Community Land Trust (CLT). After seeing many Black farmers and sharecroppers kicked off of their land as punishment for voting, Sherrod came to the conclusion that power and independence comes from ownership and access to land. In 1968, Sherrod and other activists traveled to Israel to learn about community-owned land, taking inspiration from Israeli kibbutz, which are intentional agricultural-based communes where members maintain the land and community. Upon his return to the US, Sherrod, along with his wife Shirley Sherrod, facilitated the purchase of 600 acres of land in Leesburg, Georgia.

That land was used to start the first community land trust in the US called New Communities. The CLT housed ten families and dozens of other community members worked on the community farm. In 1985, financial issues forced New Communities to shut down. In 2009, however, they won a \$12 million settlement against the federal government as compensation for the USDA's discrimination against Black farmers. Using the settlement funds, New Communities opened Resora, a community and agricultural center, in 2011.

What is a community land trust? CLTs are housing models that aim to ensure long term affordable housing by offering homes at discounted rates to low and moderate income buyers. They seek to bridge the gap between what homeowners can afford and the cost of homes on the open market. Like New Communities, current-day CLTs also continue to center community building and economic independence.

Land trusts are made up of three parties: funders, leaseholders, and community members. Funders facilitate the purchase and upkeep of land. Leaseholders refer to folks who purchase homes from the CLT while community members are folks from the surrounding area who don't live on CLT land. Membership is open to anyone in the community. As such, all community members are able to have a say in the development of their home and community.

CLTs purchase land off of the open market, often working with city agencies to buy land at discounted rates. Once the CLT acquires land, members of the community can enter into a ground lease with the CLT, becoming leaseholders. The ground lease allows eligible individuals to purchase a home on the CLT's land while the CLT retains ownership of the land itself. Ground leases also establish a resale formula, which determines the sale price of the home for if and when the homeowner decides to sell. This formula ensures

that the home remains priced at an affordable rate. By continuing to own the land once a house is purchased, CLTs permanently invest in that home and ensure it remains affordable for every future resident.

CLTs remain active avenues for affordable housing and community growth. In St Paul, for example, the Rondo CLT has been active since 1993 and aims to provide housing for people who have traditionally been excluded from homeownership.

CLTs are not limited to providing homes. They can also lease commercial properties and become vibrant community spaces. Starting in 2009 as a way to support small minority-owned businesses in the face of rapidly rising rents, the Rondo CLT developed the Selby Milton Victoria Project, which allotted 9300 square feet of commercial space to host businesses like the literary and community space, In Black Ink.

Check out Rondo CLT [here](#) and learn more about other Minnesota-based CLTs [here](#)!

Community Feature



Lynette Harris (center) with the Mom's Food Shelf crew, April 2020. Image: Mom's Food Shelf

An ESHJ Interview with Lynette Harris

by Lena Abara

This month, the ESHJ spoke with Lynette Harris, who works intensively within the East Side of St. Paul. She currently runs two organizations in the St. Paul area, Care4All Lab Service and Mom's Food Shelf.

Care4All Lab Service provides professional in-home and other health care services that allows their clients to remain safely and comfortably within their homes. In our conversation, Lynette spoke about how it is a full lab service and does the same types of important testing as the Department of Minnesota Health. These tests include Dot and Non-Dot, gender reveal, DNA, and rapid free COVID-19 testing.

Lynette emphasized the importance of having these tests available to the community and to all people. The lab service currently is the only African-American lead business within this industry and as well the only mobile one in Minnesota. She shared with us the importance of the mobile factor and going to clients' houses to help them with their needs, which opens the availability towards people in their elder years. As this business continues to grow, with plans of opening a second location soon, Lynette tells us she is "learning as it goes" and taking lessons from other Lab Services areas in the Southern states of the USA, which lead very effective operations. The further expansion of this business sees hopes of potentially offering services in rural areas in MN and outside of the state, such as Iowa and Nebraska.

As per their company mission statement, Mom's Food Shelf is a mobile food shelf that helps low and moderate income families in MN who are in need of food and other everyday necessities. It is a grass-roots food shelf, which means it is run by community members. Lynette started this food shelf 15 years ago and runs it as a mobile service as well, moving towards the areas where the people in the most need are served. Because of increasing inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic, it has not been the easiest to run. As Lynette said, "We are living in very trying times and food prices will be potentially tripling in August". Mom's Food Shelf is a donation based organization and sending in contributions helps continue to provide meals to individuals in our community and to run the operation, as a lot of effort goes on behind the scenes. Lynette encourages people to check out their facebook page, where she posts about the importance of having non-perishable food and other updates on the current happenings. She believes that through the use of social media, more can be done for those in need and people who want to help out.

On how Lynette sees her impact in the community, "I hope to encourage and inspire others working in the health care spire and minority businesses". Both

Care4All Lab Services and Mom's Food shelf will continue to provide necessary assistance to those in need of it and inspire those who want to go into these fields. If you want more information on Care4All Lab Services, visit their [website](#). If you would like to be involved in Mom's Food Shelf, visit their [Facebook page](#) or send an email to momsfoodshelf@yahoo.com.

Community Resources

HOME Line

HOME Line provides free and low-cost legal, organizing, education, and advocacy services so that tenants throughout Minnesota can solve their own rental housing problems.

For assistance, you can [send an email](#) to a HOME Line attorney or call 612-728-5767.

Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services (SMRLS)

SMRLS provides free, high-quality legal help to low-income people in critical civil matters, like securing food, shelter, and safety.

For assistance, call 1-888-575-2954 or [apply online](#).

Affordable Homeownership Pilot: Local Housing Incentives Account (LHIA)

The LHIA Affordable Homeownership Pilot will provide grants to support affordable homeownership development, including acquisition and rehabilitation, for projects that best meet the following two priorities:

- **Racial Equity Priority:** create homeownership opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and other ethnic or racial groups that own homes at disproportionately lower rates than white households in the region; and
- **Geographic Choice Priority:** create affordable homeownership opportunities in parts of the region where it is most challenging to do so.

To schedule a meeting for more information, [click here](#).

St. Paul Foreclosure Prevention Program

The City of St Paul has partnered with the Minnesota Homeownership Center to offer the St Paul Homeownership Preservation Program (SPHPP). The program provides support to homeowners within the city limits of St Paul who are experiencing difficulty paying their mortgage or other housing expenses. SPHPP offers foreclosure prevention advising and limited financial assistance.

To learn about the program, call 651-236-8952 or check out their [eligibility tool](#).

Home Help MN

HomeHelpMN is offered through Minnesota Housing to help if you have fallen behind on your mortgage or other housing-related expenses due to the pandemic. Whether it's providing financial assistance or guiding you to trusted resources, they can get you the help you need, at the time you need it most.

To apply or learn more about the program, call 1-800-388-3226 and check out their [application preparation resource](#).

Educational Resources

Audio

[ESFL Podcasts: Rent Stabilization with Tram Hoang](#)

Reading

[University of Minnesota CURA Twin Cities Gentrification Project](#)

Video

[ESFL YouTube: Evictions Update](#)

Call for artists!

The East Side Freedom Library believes in the power of community art to fuel our fight for justice, and we want to promote your work. If your art speaks to the soul of our community and you want to share it with the people, please send it our way.

Email us at
media@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org

In each publication, we will feature a new artist in our newsletter.

This month, our featured artist is Zoe Quinn. Zoe is a collaborator at ESFL who leads the community quilt project.

The quilt squares are created by community members in response to the question "What do you want to cultivate in your community?"

The garden boxes are part of a current project Zoe is working on with Beloved Church in St. Paul. Zoe worked with Katie Matson-Daley to facilitate a community painting session and she is in the process of completing the project right now. The overarching themes of the community piece are connection and growth.





[Subscribe to the East Side Unified Housing Justice Journal](#)

[Subscribe to the East Side Freedom Library Newsletter](#)

[East Side Housing Justice Program Webpage](#)



East Side

Housing

Justice



East Side

Freedom

Library

Donate to the East Side Freedom Library

Contact ESHJ at media@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org with any inquiries about the newsletter or housing justice.