



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
MONDAY, JULY 13 @ 5:30 P.M.
Arlington Community Center - Council Chambers**

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes
 - A. June 2, 2020
 - B. June 8, 2020
 - C. June 16, 2020
5. Approval of Financial Reports
June 2020
6. New Business
 - A. SBDC 2021 Budget Request
 - B. CARES ACT Funding
 - C. Consider updating the Commercial Lots Policy
7. Old Business
 - A. Nickel Property – rented out to Alex Fredin
 - B. Marketing Ideas
8. Planning and Zoning update – Tim Scanlon-Johnson
9. EDA Director update on businesses and housing
10. Director and Board Comments
11. Adjourn



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, June 2 @ 5:30 P.M.
Arlington Community Center - Council Chambers**

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://meetings.ringcentral.com/j/1481014670>

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Meeting ID: 148 101 4670

International numbers available: <https://meetings.ringcentral.com/teleconference>

1. Call to Order – Meeting called to order at 5:30 pm by President Dean Bergersen with the following present: Amy Newsom, Kurt Menk, Tom Hatlestad, and by RingCentral: Dean Bergersen, Tim Kloeckl, Larry Sorenson, Rich Nagel, Justin Horstman. Howard Brinkman arrived at 5:35 pm. Laura Gilman was absent.
2. Pledge of Allegiance – All recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of Agenda – Motion by Kloeckl to approve the agenda, second by Hatlestad. Motion carried.
4. Approve/Deny Purchase Agreement with AJH Properties, LLC – tabled from May 11 meeting
Motion by Hatlestad, second by Sorenson to Deny Purchase Agreement with AJH Properties, LLC, second by Sorenson. Motion carried.
5. Approve/Deny Development Agreement with AJH Properties, LLC – tabled from May 11 meeting
Motion by Bergersen to Deny the Development Agreement with AJH Properties, LLC, second by Kloeckl. Motion carried.
6. Discussion on Top Notch Construction – Motion by Hatlestad to move forward with Top Notch Construction, second by Bergersen. Motion Carried. Public Hearing will be scheduled June 16 at 5:30 pm.

Discussion by Menk that he would like to see the Commercial Lots Policy changed include financial requirements. Consensus of the Board not to change the policy while in the middle of negotiating with Top Notch Construction, Board can revisit it later.

7. Adjourn – Motion by Kloeckl to adjourn at 5:50 pm, second by Menk. Motion carried.

EDA Director Amy Newsom

President Dean Bergersen



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, JUNE 8 @ 5:30 P.M.
Arlington Community Center - Council Chambers**

1. Call to Order – Meeting was called to order by President Dean Bergersen at 5:30 pm.
Present: Kurt Menk, Larry Sorenson, Dean Bergersen, Tim Kloeckl, Tom Hatlestad, Howard Brinkman
Absent: Laura Gilman
Staff present: EDA Director Amy Newsom, P&Z Administrator Michael Kedrowski – via phone
2. Pledge of Allegiance – All stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of Agenda -Motion by Koeckl to approve the agenda, second by Brinkman. Motion carried.
4. Approval of Minutes – Motion by Sorenson to approve both the May 11 and June 2 minutes, second by Hatlestad. Motion carried.
 - A. May 11, 2020
 - B. June 2, 2020
5. Approval of Financial Reports – Motion by Hatlestad to approve the May Financial Report, second by Kloeckl. Motion carried.
May 2020
6. New Business
 - A. Discussion regarding incentives to build 8 Villas on multi-unit lot near racetrack
Motion by Bergersen to offer Siwek a subsidy of \$20,000 in addition to WAC and SAC waivers on the 8 homes, second by Hatlestad. Motion carried. Newsom to write proposal to Siwek and present to Council for approval.
 - B. Approve/Deny Resolution 07-2020 A Resolution Forgiving the Façade Improvement Loan to Hip Hop Family Shop from the Arlington EDA Façade Improvement Loan Program for a Project at 339 West Main Street
Motion by Kloeck to approve Resolution 07-2020 Forgiving the Façade Improvement Loan to Hip Hop Family Shop from the Arlington EDA Façade Improvement Loan, second by Hatlestad. Motion carried. Menk, Sorenson, Bergersen, Hatlestad, Kloeckl and Brinkman all voted in favor. Gilman was absent.
 - C. Correspondence from Nick Melsha regarding former Siduri Hops property
Motion by Kloeck to inform Melsha that the EDA wants to keep that property for economic development, second by Brinkman. Motion carried.
7. Old Business
 - A. Marketing Ideas – Motion by Hatlestad to spend the \$1,900 EDA advertising budget to help Choose Arlington market the City, second by Sorenson. Motion carried. Newsom and Menk will work on placing ads.
8. Planning and Zoning update – Michael Kedrowski

Kedrowski joined the EDA by telephone and provided a brief update on Siwek's plans for the housing development near the racetrack, information on the Seneca Trailer Park, and stated that P&Z is considering a new orderly annexation with the Townships.

- 9. EDA Director update on businesses and housing
Nothing additional.

10. Director and Board Comments

Councilmember Hatlestad discussed the Council's decision to send a letter to Siwek asking him to evict the Seneca Trailer Park residents. He asked for the EDA's recommendation. The consensus of the EDA was to grant an annual Conditional Use Permit for the Trailer Park.

11. Adjourn

Motion by Hatlestad to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 pm, second by Sorenson. Motion carried.

EDA Director Amy Newsom

President Dean Bergersen



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, June 16 @ 5:30 PM
Arlington Community Center - Council Chambers**

1. Call to Order – President Dean Bergersen called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.
Present: Kurt Menk, Larry Sorenson, Dean Bergersen, Tim Kloeck, Howard Brinkman
Absent: Tom Hatlestad, Laura Gilman
Staff Present: Amy Newsom - EDA Director
Also Present: Justin Horstman, Charity Horstman
2. Pledge of Allegiance – All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Approval of Agenda – Motion by Sorenson to approve the agenda, second by Kloeckl. Motion carried.
4. **Public Hearing regarding sale of parcel 31.0874.000 to Top Notch Construction (Justin Horstman)** – Justin and Charity Horstman were present to discuss their building plans and number of employees.

They are proposing 5 FT employees, buying the land at \$10,000 under the City’s Commercial Lots Policy, constructing a building valued at \$300,000 substantially completed by April 30, 2021 and completion by July 31, 2021.
5. Approve/Deny Purchase Agreement with Justin Horstman
Motion by Kloeckl to approve the purchase agreement with Horstman, contingent on receiving the business balance sheet by June 18, second by Brinkman. Motion carried.
6. Approve/Deny Development Agreement with Justin Horstman
Motion by Kloeck to approve the development agreement with Horstman, contingent on receiving the business balance sheet by June 18, second by Sorenson. Motion carried.
7. Adjourn – Motion by Kloeck to adjourn at 5:59 pm, second by Brinkman. Motion carried.

EDA Director Amy Newsom

President Dean Bergersen

ARLINGTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Financial Report

As of June 30, 2020

General Fund:

Econ. Develop. Dept.

	<u>Annual Budget</u>	<u>Expenses for June</u>	<u>YTD Exp. as of June 30</u>	<u>Budget Balance</u>	<u>%</u>
Other Pay (Per Diems)	1,250.00	0.00	0.00	1,250.00	0.0%
Wages & Benefits	27,275.00	1,893.14	12,289.68	14,985.32	45.1%
Prof. Services	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.0%
Legal	500.00	0.00	30.00	470.00	6.0%
Postage/Printing/Advertising	1,900.00	0.00	0.00	1,900.00	0.0%
Other/Office/Phone	1,000.00	30.00	60.00	940.00	6.0%
Reimbursible Exp.	<u>100.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>0.0%</u>
Econ. Dev. Dept. Total:	\$32,025.00	\$1,923.14	\$12,379.68	\$19,645.32	38.7%

Capital Equipment Fund #401

Capital Outlay - EDA	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00
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EDA Fund #410

Beginning Balance	January 1, 2020	4,336.34
+ Interest		95.77
- WAC/SAC Waivers		<u>0.00</u>
Ending Balance	June 30, 2020	\$4,432.11

Special EDA Funds #204

	<u>Allocation</u>	<u>Loans Outstanding</u>	<u>Balance</u>	<u>YTD Loan Interest Received</u>	<u>YTD Fund Interest Earned</u>	<u>Actual Fund Balance</u>
RRR Loan & Subsidy (See below)	\$151,873.05	\$40,000.00	\$111,873.05	0.00	\$1,046.57	\$112,919.62
Facade & Sign Imp.Loans (See below)	\$23,297.20	\$1,150.22	\$22,146.98	0.00	\$201.09	\$22,348.07
Child Care Loans (See below)	\$3,148.14	\$0.00	\$3,148.14	0.00	\$27.12	\$3,175.26
Property Development Fund	\$12,449.41		\$5,512.51	0.00	\$79.49	\$5,592.00
+ Land Rent	\$1,025.50					
+ Land sale	\$1.00					
- Land Refund	-\$5,000.00					
- Professional Services	-\$1,735.00					
- Property Taxes	-\$1,158.00					
- Land advertising	-\$70.40					
Totals:	\$190,767.80	\$41,150.22	\$142,680.68	\$0.00	\$1,354.27	\$144,034.95

Revolving Loan Fund #205

(see detail below)

	<u>Original Loan Amount</u>	<u>Outstanding Principal Amount</u>
#204 Special EDA Funds Detail		

R-R-R Loan Program:

\$0.00

\$0.00

Business Subsidy

Scott Equipment Co.	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00
Forgivable after 5 years	Mar-20	
Totals:	\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00

Facade Improvements:

R&R Auto	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	Forgiven 2/10/20
Forgivable after 1 year	Dec-18		
Hip Hop Shop (Allison)	\$909.45	\$0.00	Forgiven 6/8/20
Forgivable after 1 year	May-19		
Totals:	\$3,409.45	\$0.00	

Sign Loan Program:

Fredin Construction	\$150.22	\$150.22
Forgivable after 3 years	May-20	
Arlington Animal Clinic	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Forgivable after 3 years	Jun-20	
Totals:	\$1,150.22	\$1,150.22

Child Care Providers:

\$0.00

\$0.00

#205 Revolving Loan Fund Detail

Arlington Auto & Farm Supply	\$40,000.00	\$17,006.97
5%-15 Years	Jul-10	
Bullert Hospitality Group	\$60,000.00	\$60,000.00
4.75 %-10 Years	Apr-20	

TOTAL \$100,000.00

\$77,006.97



South Central Region
Small Business Development Center
Minnesota State University, Mankato
424 North Riverfront Drive, Suite 101
Mankato, MN 56001

June 25, 2020

Amy Newsom
City of Arlington
204 Shamrock Dr.
Arlington, MN 55307

SUBJECT: 2021 BUDGET REQUEST

Dear Amy,

The Small business Development Center (SBDC) - South Central Region is submitting this request for an appropriation to help sustain our program for calendar year 2021. We are required to match our core funding from the U.S. Small Business Administration with state, regional and local support. Our request is for \$1,000.

SBDCs are a national network under the U.S. Small Business Administration and distinguished from other organizations by a stringent accreditation process mandated by Congress (based on the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Program). Ours is a proven program that effectively leverages more resources and provides more outcomes than any other business technical assistance provider in the region and the state of Minnesota.

We provide **no-cost** customized technical assistance to businesses at any point in their entire life cycle, from start-up to growth to exit strategies, in the counties of Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca and Watonwan (Region Nine). In addition to our core services, our work plan emphasizes increased outreach to minorities, veterans, underserved communities, and businesses in need of succession planning. We cannot address all of these needs without robust investment from support partners.

Strong financial support is especially needed in the coming year given the unprecedented COVID-19 response and recovery necessary to keep our economy strong. Our Center served over 500 clients in 2019 and we expect the demand for services to continue to increase.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our impact and services as part of your review. We are deeply committed to our mission of *helping businesses start, grow, and succeed*, and look forward to your shared investment in creating jobs and a healthier, more resilient small business sector.

Sincerely,

Michael C. Hahn
Regional Director

Commercial Buildings & Lots Policy

The City of Arlington has acquired buildings and lots for the purpose of economic development. The intention of this policy is to set the price of commercial buildings and lots. The goal of the City of Arlington is to increase the tax base for the City. It is the purpose of this policy to outline the terms and conditions of the sale of buildings and lots with an assessed value of less than \$250,000.

1. Sale of buildings and lots will be approved by the Arlington Council.
2. Commercial Buildings and Lots will be sold for \$1 per lot when the business meets the following criteria:
 - A. Will create at least 15 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions based in the City of Arlington.
3. Commercial Buildings and Lots will be sold for \$5,000 when the business meets the following criteria:
 - A. Will create at least 10 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.
4. Commercial Buildings and Lots will be sold for \$10,000 when the business meets the following criteria:
 - A. Will create at least 5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.
5. If a lot(s) is purchased for \$1 or \$10,000 and construction is not started within 180 days of closing, the lot(s) will be returned to the City of Arlington. Purchase price will be refunded, minus closing costs.
6. Commercial Buildings and Lots that do not meet any of the above criteria will be sold at the Market Rate Value.
7. Closing will occur within 4 months of signing the purchase agreement.
8. A Development Agreement must be approved by City Council and both parties must adhere to the terms of the agreement.

Adopted by EDA: 5/14/2018

Adopted by City Council 5/21/2018

Amended by EDA: 6/11/18

Amended by City Council: 6/18/2018

In the Twin Cities' Robust Dining Scene, Few Black-Owned Businesses

In the wake of George Floyd's killing, chefs and restaurateurs are looking for ways to fix the racial imbalance.

By Mecca Bos

July 7, 2020

MINNEAPOLIS — Before the coronavirus decimated the restaurant industry, Minneapolis and St. Paul were being hailed around the country for their up-and-coming culinary scene.

Ann Kim, the owner of three acclaimed restaurants including the Korean-influenced pizzeria Young Joni, won a James Beard award last year for Best Chef Midwest. Lauded chefs like Tim McKee, Alex Roberts, Doug Flicker and Gavin Kaysen have kept the region on the lips and must-visit lists of gastro-tourists. Minneapolis has large Southeast Asian and East African neighborhoods with mom-and-pop restaurants that rival any of their kind in the nation.

But Minnesota has a marked scarcity of food businesses owned or operated by African-Americans. Of the more than half-million businesses that the 2012 census reported in the state, about 20,000 were Black-owned.

There are so few African-American food and beverage establishments in the Twin Cities that they are nearly impossible to find if you don't know where to look — even on the Northside of Minneapolis, where more than half the residents are Black (in a city where less than 20 percent of the population is African-American).

Since the killing of George Floyd and amid continued protests against racial injustice, some restaurant owners, chefs and others have begun talking about ways to change that imbalance.

"I am a Black restaurateur and I am changing it by existing," said Jared Brewington, 41, who has opened two restaurants. One of them, Funky Grits, at East 38th Street and Chicago Avenue, was directly across the street from the site of Mr. Floyd's fatal encounter with the police, before closing last October.

The other, Thigh Times Birdhouse, in the city's gentrified North Loop neighborhood, closed during the pandemic. Mr. Brewington hopes to reopen in another location, and he has shifted his focus to plans for a new bar and restaurant, Cologne House Cafe, in rural Cologne, Minn., about 36 miles from Minneapolis, where he lives with his wife, Jenn, and their young daughter.

He and his business partner, Ben Brickweg, are working on a crowdsourcing platform to help L.G.B.T. people and people of color find capital to start businesses. He hopes it will inspire white people to invest in those projects. "Call it a guilt bucket, I don't care," Mr. Brewington said.

Dawn Drouillard, 49, and Eden Fitzgerald, 46, are the white co-owners of Fabulous Catering, known for their work for high-end clients and galas. The pandemic has so stymied their business that they plan to shut down.

But rather than quickly sell their building to the "white development people" who they say are already showing interest, Ms. Drouillard said they hope to find a way for people of color to acquire it.

"There are so many glaring inequities in our city," she said. "We have a small, little piece of the pie to give. The only asset we have is our building."





Dawn Drouillard and Eden Fitzgerald, co-owners of Fabulous Catering, which is closing due to the pandemic, are hoping to find a way for people of color to acquire their building. Jenn Ackerman for The New York Times

To that end, the partners have turned their facilities — just over a mile from the Third Precinct police station that went up in flames in the days after Mr. Floyd's death — over to a food-relief operation called F12 People's Kitchen, in which volunteers serve about 1,200 meals a week to homeless people living in a neighborhood encampment. The group is trying to secure funding — through grass-roots efforts on

social media, as well as via Nexus Community Partners, an organization that helps community wealth building — and hopes ultimately to buy the Fabulous Catering building.

The collective envisions running it as a community kitchen that small food businesses can use, and where community members can simply get a hot meal if they need one. Gina Peña, 26, who identifies as “a young, queer, Black person who loves to cook,” is currently working as the group’s lead cook.

Eddie Wu, 41, who with his wife, Eve Wu, 40, owns the celebrated breakfast-and-lunch diner Cook St. Paul, said they are talking about not reopening whenever the governor gives the green light, and instead turning the diner over to people of color to run.

“Actions speak louder than words,” said Mr. Wu, a white man who took his Korean wife’s surname. “I can use what privilege I have. Enough with white people.”





Eve and Eddie Wu are planning to offer six-month residencies to chefs of color at their restaurant, Cook St. Paul. Jenn Ackerman for The New York Times

Mr. Wu has never been content to quietly run a restaurant. When Philando Castile was fatally shot by a police officer in St. Paul in 2016, Mr. Wu placed signs reading “Black Lives Matter” and “Philando Castile Matters” on his marquee, drawing a backlash from some white customers.

Before Mr. Wu bought the diner in 2013, it housed Serlin’s Cafe, a 67-year old, white-owned restaurant slinging pancakes and hash browns. Under Mr. Wu’s ownership, the diner changed much the same way as its East Side neighborhood, which has attracted a large Southeast Asian population, serving dishes like bibimbap alongside the basted eggs.

Mr. Wu also offered the space to rising chefs and restaurateurs for pop-ups before pop-ups became commonplace in Minnesota, charging them little more than the night’s operating expenses. Now, the Wus want to extend that model, offering chefs of color, especially Black chefs, residencies of six months or longer, and perhaps living quarters upstairs.

Mr. Wu said he wants to see exceptional chefs of color get some of the recognition that now goes to “the boring white dudes that we’ve got a never-ending supply of here in Minnesota — which includes me.”

Allena Dancer, a 44-year-old Black woman who ran two one-night pop-ups at Cook St. Paul, is in talks with the Wus about taking on the first residency this summer. She said her project, called the Peach Eatery, would serve “soul comfort food,” like her peach cobbler and her husband’s Memphis-inspired smoked meat.

“For me, this means getting my name out there without worrying about all the overhead,” Ms. Dancer said. “People know Cook. This will give me a name to show people that there is good soul food, and it’s consistent, and it’s here to stay. My daughter is 3, and she already wants a kitchen. I want to leave a legacy.”

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A Black-Owned Distillery in Minneapolis Pushes Forward

From the pandemic to protests to arson, Du Nord Craft Spirits has dealt with repeated turmoil and emerged with a new purpose.

By Robert Simonson

July 7, 2020

When Chris and Shanelle Montana founded Du Nord Craft Spirits in 2013, they chose the Longfellow neighborhood in southern Minneapolis, “in part because it was a little quieter,” Mr. Montana said.

It didn’t work out that way. Over the past four months, Du Nord has been buffeted and transformed by each new trauma to shake the city, and the world.

In mid-March, with the coronavirus converging on the United States, the couple, like many other distillers, ceased making their gin, vodka, whiskey and liqueurs, and began manufacturing much-needed hand sanitizer.

Mr. Montana handed out that sanitizer to protesters outside the nearby Third Precinct police station after the killing of George Floyd on May 25. The distiller was tear-gassed twice for his trouble.

In the early hours of May 29, Du Nord, like many businesses in the neighborhood, was in flames. The fire activated its sprinkler system, which added water damage to the devastation. The night after that, the Montanas’ East Lake Street apartment building was set on fire.



Bottles charred in the fire at Du Nord on May 29, the night the nearby Third Precinct police station burned. Jenn Ackerman for The New York Times

No sooner had Du Nord begun to clean up than Mr. Montana quickly pivoted, converting what was left of the building, where he leases space, into an impromptu food bank to aid the reeling neighborhood.

“I think one of the things that has made it easier personally is there’s just so much to do,” said Mr. Montana, 37. “You don’t really have time to sit down and soak it all in. I might be bummed because some people set fire to my distillery. That saddens me and angered me. But right now, I have food every night. I’m fine. There are people doing so much worse than I am.”

Du Nord’s experience is all the more remarkable in the current cultural context because Mr. Montana is one of the few Black distillery owners in the United States.



A door at Du Nord was broken into during the unrest following George Floyd's killing. Jenn Ackerman for The New York Times

During the protests and ensuing unrest that engulfed much of East Lake Street, he had to weigh his instincts as a business owner against the dangers that might await him outside. When he heard at 2 a.m. on May 29 that his distillery was on fire, he did not rush to the site, but waited until daybreak.

“That was very scary,” said Shanelle Montana, 36, “the thought of his going back to a burning distillery when the police walk by. Are they going to think he’s a distillery owner mourning his distillery?”



Employees salvaged some whiskey from the fire. Jenn Ackerman for The New York Times

Though the Montanas, who have three young children, have enough to contend with on their own, their focus has been helping the community. The food bank in the distillery has paused while critical repairs are made to the waterlogged building, but Du Nord is likely to reopen it, based on community need in the coming months.

When friends started GoFundMe accounts for them, the couple’s reaction was to answer those efforts with a fund-raising drive of their own to help other businesses in the area owned by people of color. “I knew a lot of them were uninsured or underinsured,” Mr. Montana said.

The Du Nord Craft Spirits Riot Recovery Fund, administered by the newly created nonprofit Du Nord Foundation, has since raised roughly two-thirds of its \$1 million goal. “We’re hoping that within the next two weeks, we’re going to start writing checks,” said Mr. Montana, who hopes to get back to producing spirits by the fall.

This generosity in the face of personal adversity has not surprised the couple’s friends and colleagues. “He’s always making the best of whatever situation is handed to him,” said Jon Kreidler, a co-founder of Tattersall Distilling, a Minneapolis company that teamed up with Du Nord on sanitizer production.



Jon Kreidler, a founder of Tattersall Distillery, which joined with Du Nord to make hand sanitizer. Jenn Ackerman for The New York Times

“Chris and Shanelle would never turn down an opportunity to serve the community,” said Jessica Ward-Denison, an organizer of the food bank. “With the scariness and sadness of the days leading up to this, I think there was a great need for something positive.”

Ms. Montana, who is white, took more time getting to that positive place.

“I was very angry for a long time,” she said of the destruction. “A lot that were hit were small mom-and-pop businesses by people of color that had been in business for a long time.

“But as I talked to people, a lot of them said, ‘If this is what it takes to change things, then this is what it takes.’ It really changed my perspective. I got there. It took me longer, but I got there, to see the hope in this and to separate the damage from the change it might bring.”

Mr. Montana benefited from a broader view, informed by his childhood. Soon after his family moved to Minnesota from Indiana, in 1991, he recalled a rally and chants of “No justice, no peace.”

“Then, it was about Rodney King,” he said. “It occurred to me that here we are, almost 30 years on, the chants are the same, the problems are the same.”

This time, though, he senses a shift.

“I don’t condone the property damage, but I do understand it,” Mr. Montana said. “If that means there’s going to be attention paid to this fundamental issue in our country, then it’s worth it. I don’t know if there’s a person of color in this country that, whether they own the business or not, who would not pay that price over and over again.”

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Two Chefs Moved to Rural Minnesota to Expand on Their Mission of Racial Justice

Mateo Mackbee and Erin Lucas left Minneapolis for a small central Minnesota community, where they are using their restaurant, bakery and farm to promote diversity and teach children about food.

By Brett Anderson

July 7, 2020

ST. JOSEPH, Minn. — Krewe, a restaurant in this small central-Minnesota city, is a tribute to Mary Mackbee, a former high school principal who raised four children in a Twin Cities suburb on the cooking of her native New Orleans.

“More than anything, gumbo is the smell I remember,” said Mateo Mackbee, one of those children and the chef and co-owner of Krewe. “That’s one you would get outside the front door.”

Mr. Mackbee was in the dining room of Krewe, a window-lined restaurant in a new low-rise building in downtown St. Joseph, a community of 7,000 about 70 miles northwest of Minneapolis. His mother was there, too, sharing stories about her life and overseeing the jambalaya that Mr. Mackbee’s 21-year-old son, Makel, was cooking for takeout service later that day.

Krewe’s sign reads “est. 1944,” Ms. Mackbee’s birth year, even though it opened in late May, four days after George Floyd was killed while in the custody of the Minneapolis police.

Mr. Mackbee, 47, and Erin Lucas, 27, his girlfriend and business partner, moved to central Minnesota from Minneapolis two years ago. They were driven by a shared desire to bring awareness of racial inequities to rural communities, and to find an alternative to the limited career options available to them in Minneapolis and St. Paul.



Mr. Mackbee at Krewe, his New Orleans-style restaurant in St. Joseph. Andrea Ellen Reed for The New York Times

“I had grown kind of weary of the restaurant scene in the Twin Cities, where it was hard for someone like myself,” Mr. Mackbee said. “I’m a little bit older and a little bit darker than most of the people on the line.”

The partners began with a successful pop-up restaurant in New London, a small city in a neighboring county. They sank deeper roots this spring, when they also opened Flour & Flower, a bakery in a cottage-style building behind Krewe. Ms. Lucas is the bakery’s chef.

On a sunny morning in mid-June, the line of customers waiting to buy her croissants, baguettes and pastries ran outside the bakery nearly to Krewe’s back door. Both businesses are a short bicycle ride from the Lake Wobegon Trail.



Ms. Lucas is the chef at Flour & Flower, a bakery located in the alley behind Krewe. Andrea Ellen Reed for The New York Times

St. Joseph, though home to the small liberal-arts College of Saint Benedict, is not a cradle of racial diversity. It’s more than 90 percent white. Locals whose families have lived here for generations say Krewe is the city’s first brick-and-mortar business owned by an African-American. And the community is in a part of Minnesota known for its divisive politics around immigration and race.

But St. Joseph offered Mr. Mackbee an opportunity for ownership that he hadn’t received in the cities, despite his culinary degree and nearly a decade of experience in some of the area’s most respected restaurants. He proudly points out that three members of Krewe’s four-person kitchen staff are people of color.

“We’ve flipped the scenario that I’m normally used to,” he said.

Jon C. Petters, who owns the properties where Krewe and Flour & Flower are located, sold the couple hard on the potential of opening their businesses in St. Joseph. Mr. Mackbee and Ms. Lucas were first wooed to central Minnesota by Mark Kopka, whom Mr. Mackbee met in 2015 in a bar in a Twin Cities suburb. Mr. Kopka is the pastor of Nordland Lutheran Church in Paynesville, which, like St. Joseph, is in Stearns County.



Mark Kopka is the pastor of Nordland Lutheran Church in Paynesville. He recruited Mr. Mackbee and Ms. Lucas to central Minnesota after meeting Mr. Mackbee in a bar. Andrea Ellen Reed for The New York Times

The men bonded over Mr. Mackbee's dream of starting a farm where he could bring students of color who didn't otherwise have access to nature — a goal the couple plan to realize in September through Model Citizen, the nonprofit group they created.

"We talked about this larger vision to get kids connected to the land and to food," Mr. Kopka recalled. "I said, 'Dude, come check out Paynesville.'"

Mr. Kopka introduced Mr. Mackbee and Ms. Lucas to locals who were hungry for an alternative to the chain restaurants that proliferate in this region of farmland, rolling prairie and lakes. But the chefs were welcomed for reasons that went beyond their culinary talent.

"A lot of people who grew up here, they've never known a person of color," said Steve Peterson, 62, a retired General Mills executive from Paynesville who attends Mr. Kopka's church. "There's something about these guys being here that helps."

Stearns County, while still about 85 percent white, is home to some of the largest immigrant communities in Minnesota. Agriculture and food-processing jobs in central Minnesota towns like Willmar (home to Jennie-O Turkey, in neighboring Kandiyohi County), and St. Cloud, the Stearns County seat, have drawn workers, particularly from East Africa and Latin America, for three decades.

The demographic changes have touched off a rise in nativist politics and xenophobia in Stearns and bordering counties. In 2017, a St. Cloud City Council member proposed a moratorium on new immigrants. The motion failed, but it attested to the open white resentment over immigration. The same year, a Willmar man was arrested after placing a pig's foot on the table of a farmers' market booth operated by young Somali Muslims.



Mr. Mackbee in the kitchen at Krewe. The chef ate New Orleans food growing up in the suburbs outside the Twin Cities. Andrea Ellen Reed for The New York Times

Growing up in Stearns County, Emma Ditlevson, a 21-year-old Krewe line cook, overheard friends' parents as they criticized immigrants for failing to assimilate.

"I don't think people here realize that it's a beautiful thing to represent a different culture in a community that doesn't have that much diversity," said Ms. Ditlevson, who was born in South Korea and adopted by a white couple. "Instead of seeing the culture as something beautiful and something to embrace and something to understand more, they see it as something people should just give up."

Mr. Mackbee said St. Joseph doesn't feel far removed from the unrest and anger unleashed by Mr. Floyd's killing. The St. Cloud police used tear gas to disperse a crowd of protesters three weeks after Mr. Floyd's death.

He and Ms. Lucas were drawn to the region in part for the opportunity to confront issues of racial injustice with Model Citizen, just on prairie land instead of pavement — an impulse that is as much a tribute to his mother's influence as Krewe's menu.

"We're probably worse here, as far as racial tension," Mr. Mackbee said. "I feel like my mom prepared me for coming out here and facing whatever comes my way."

Mr. Mackbee is soft-spoken, though blunt. Two years ago, he ran for City Council in New London. "I came in third," he said.

Race in America ›

Recent Changes Sparked by the Protests

Updated June 29, 2020

- Mississippi lawmakers voted to retire the state flag, which is dominated by the Confederate battle emblem that has flown for 126 years, adding a punctuation point to years of efforts to take down Confederate symbols across the South.
- The Army will remove photographs of candidates in promotion board hearings, senior officials said, as part of an effort to address why so many black officers are being passed over in favor of their white counterparts.
- President Trump signed an executive to encourage changes in policing, including new restrictions on chokeholds. But the order will have little immediate impact, and does not address calls for broader action and a new

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Small-town life is not new to him. He attended college in rural Wisconsin on a soccer scholarship. While there, he recalled, he was asked to speak to a white student who had hung a noose over a Black student's dorm-room door.

"They wanted me to be the one to tell this guy this was a bad thing," he said. "I've been a token my entire life."

Krewe's opening would be notable even if it were in New Orleans, a majority-Black city where restaurants owned by African-Americans are still relatively rare. Equally unusual are restaurant chefs of Mr. Mackbee's training who learned to cook New Orleans cuisine at home — through recipes that descend directly from African-American home cooks of the Jim Crow era.

Mr. Mackbee has never worked in a New Orleans-style restaurant. And the food Ms. Mackbee cooked for her children in the 1980s and '90s was virtually untouched by the vagaries of contemporary restaurant trends. The first time she ate at a white-owned restaurant, she said, was on a visit to Commander's Palace, in New Orleans, in the mid-60s. She moved to the Twin Cities a few years later.

"I never had a steak until I came up here," she said. "I always thought steak was cooked with gravy."

Mr. Mackbee talks about his mother's 51-year career as an educator as much as he does about her cooking. Ms. Mackbee served 26 years as principal of Central High School, the state's oldest high school and the largest in its capital, St. Paul.



Mary Mackbee, Mr. Mackbee's mother, at Central High School in St. Paul, where she served as principal for 26 years. Jerry Holt/Star Tribune, via Getty Images

She retired in 2019, two years after one of her former students, Melvin Carter III, was elected St. Paul's first African-American mayor. Ms. Mackbee spoke at his inauguration, which was held at Central High.

"She was one of those principals who never sat in her office," Mr. Mackbee said. "She's broken her wrist and all that kind of stuff, breaking up fights at school."

Ms. Mackbee, 76, leaned into adversity while growing up in segregated New Orleans. Her civil-rights activism occasionally drew her away from Louisiana as a young adult.

She recalled knocking on the door of a Roman Catholic bishop in Mobile, Ala., in 1965. She was there to voice her displeasure with the bishop's removal of a priest who had provided shelter for her and other Black activists when they traveled to Selma to protest that summer.

Ms. Mackbee ended up taking her grievance to a higher authority. "We wrote a letter to the pope," she said. "Never heard from him."



Ms. Mackbee inside Krewe, which is a tribute to her. Andrea Ellen Reed for The New York Times

She married Earsell Mackbee, a cornerback for the Minnesota Vikings, after moving to St. Paul in the late '60s to become the only Black teacher at a nearly all-white public school. After the couple divorced, Ms. Mackbee raised their four children alone in suburban Bloomington.

She cooked her family large pots of the dishes she had grown up eating in New Orleans, except that she used sausage where her mother, struggling to make ends meet, used hot dogs.

“That was the economical way,” Ms. Mackbee said. “But I had a job, so I could afford some real sausage.”

Mr. Mackbee cooked dinner for a group of friends at Krewe in mid-June, when the restaurant was open only for takeout. (It will begin dine-in service on Thursday.)

The gumbo, inspired by Ms. Mackbee's, is reminiscent of a style found in older, Creole restaurants in New Orleans: The broth is thin, stained by a light brown roux and loaded with shrimp and sausage.



The gumbo at Krewe is reminiscent of a style found in older, Black-owned restaurants in New Orleans. Andrea Ellen Reed for The New York Times

A Midwestern twist came from the andouille sausage made by Johnsonville, a Wisconsin company famous for its bratwurst, and shrimp raised in aboveground pools by Paul Damhof on a former cattle farm outside Willmar. (“Our Willmar water is some of the best water for raising shrimp,” Mr. Damhof said.)

Similar ingredients enriched a spicy jambalaya Mr. Mackbee also learned from his mother. Instead of mixing the ingredients together as in a paella, the traditional method in southern Louisiana, the Mackbees’ jambalaya is a savory sauce spooned over plain rice. “The way I make it, you don’t have to fish out the shrimp,” Ms. Mackbee said of the idiosyncratic technique.



Jambalaya at Krewe. Andrea Ellen Reed for The New York Times

Matt Lindstrom, a friend of the chefs, sampled these dishes, along with red beans, barbecue shrimp and bread pudding, as New Orleans music played in Krewe’s dining room. Mr. Lindstrom, 50, is a political-science professor at Saint John’s University, a small liberal-arts college for men just outside St. Joseph that is closely affiliated with the all-woman College of Saint Benedict.

He struggled to explain his excitement over finding a place like Krewe in St. Joseph.

“When I was a kid, it was a big deal to go to Applebee’s,” said Mr. Lindstrom, who grew up in Willmar. “And you had to drive to St. Cloud for that.”

In September, Mr. Mackbee and Ms. Lucas hope to bring the first group of local students to the one-acre farm they are building with Mr. Kopka and other collaborators in Paynesville. It’s based on a project the chefs tried out in New London.

“One of the things we noticed is that all of these kids are literally surrounded by farmland,” Mr. Mackbee said, “but they literally don’t have the opportunity to step onto it.”

Ms. Lucas remembers how thrilled some young Somali students were by the sight of rhubarb, assuming it was tamarind. “They were like, ‘We haven’t seen this since we were home,’” Ms. Lucas said.



The farm is on the land in Paynesville, not far from Mr. Kopka’s church. Andrea Ellen Reed for The New York Times

The new farm is near the north fork of the Crow River, on land donated to Model Citizen by the retired executive Mr. Peterson and his wife, Mary, through a partnership with Nordland church. Mr. Peterson spent his later years at General Mills trying to educate farmers on the virtues of regenerative agriculture, a sustainable farming practice that aims to improve the soil.

“We see this farm as a model for the area,” said Mr. Peterson, “to encourage other young people to be entrepreneurs, and to do what’s right for the land.”

By year’s end, Mr. Mackbee and Ms. Lucas plan to have a chicken coop, sheep and a wood-fired oven to cook for outdoor parties on the property. The ingredients will show up on their menus. And, ideally, the farm will enrich the community in other ways.

Standing outdoors on a windy afternoon last month, Mr. Mackbee looked toward a patch of forest at the edge of the still-unplowed farmland. “I need to get the kids out here to see it and to smell it,” he said.

His thoughts drifted toward a future when he can host children of color from the Twin Cities, like those his mother taught for so many years.

“If we can just get them out here for a while, away from the stress,” he said, “maybe we can help give them what they need, to be what they want to be, and not what society says they are.”

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Brett Anderson joined the Food desk as a contributor in July 2019. He was restaurant critic and features writer at The Times-Picayune, in New Orleans, from 2000 to 2019. He has won three James Beard awards, including the Jonathan Gold Local Voice Award, and was named Eater’s Reporter of the Year in 2017 for his reporting on sexual harassment in the restaurant industry. @BrettEats

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