

MORNINGSIDER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF MORNINGSIDE



Renovation of the former St. Mathews school is fully underway. Image courtesy of Jeffrey D. Lewis II

St. Matthew's Parish Receives National Recognition as Historic Site Rachel Pisano | The Morningsider

Detroit — Morningside residents can easily recognize the copper clad bell towers atop St. Matthew's Parish at the intersection of Harper and Whittier Avenues. The rich architecture and history of this iconic landmark was officially recognized in November when the National Park Service added St. Matthew's to the National Register of Historic Places.

This award confirmed for the parish that it was a beautiful example of transitional church architecture, and that they could continue to preserve their unique campus.

The Parish itself was founded in 1926 and in 1930 the school building was the first of the campus, constructed to serve an ever-growing community. The school was designed in a Tudor Revival architectural style like many of the beautiful homes in the area. Tens of thousands of students, both Catholic and non-Catholic, from the surrounding neighborhoods attended St. Matthew's School over its 75-year long history.

Story continued on page 4...

OTHER STORIES INCLUDED:

- Blight Brigade 2
- GDYT Begins 10th Yr. 3
- Land Value Tax Pt. II 5
- Lead Line Replacement Expands - 6
- Activities @ JBL 7
- Coffee x Vibes Gather 8
- Morningsider Survey 9
- Budget Hearings 10
- G.A.S. G.A.S. 11
- Future Leaders: Aisha Hinds 12
- Read-A-Thon 13
- Resources & Upcoming Events - 14





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Introducing Morningside Blight Brigade

The Morningsider

Are you sick of blight? You're not alone. Want to do something about it? Find out how you can be part of the solution at the first meeting of the Morningside Blight Brigade on **Saturday, March 23 at 9:30 a.m.** at the Morningside Café, 16369 E. Warren.

Many Morningside residents already take it upon themselves to report problems on their block to the city, through a variety of channels. Sometimes we succeed in resolving an issue, sometimes we don't.

Morningside Blight Brigade is a group of neighbors committed to ridding our community of blight by coordinating our efforts. We want to elevate and expand the work that people are already doing as individuals because we know there is strength in numbers.

Here's what Morningside Blight Brigade can do:

- Make sure everyone knows how to report a problem with blight, such as illegal dumping, abandoned cars, or neglected properties.
- Educate residents about the ordinances dealing with blight and other quality-of-life issues.
- Do periodic clean-ups along the commercial corridors and residential streets.
- Coordinate our reporting through SeeClickFix.com and the Improve Detroit app so that we can support and amplify each other's complaints. Learn how to use all the features of both.
- Take responsibility for monitoring a particular area to identify and report problems, with a goal to have eyes on every block in Morningside.
- Share information about what worked, what didn't work, and brainstorm ideas for making the city departments more responsive.

Let's kick blight out the door in '24!



THE MORNINGSIDER

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Detroit Kicks Off 10th Year Offering Summer Jobs to Youth

Jefferson Branch Library | Content Partner



Participants of Growing Detroit's Young Talent. Image courtesy of the City of Detroit

Grow Detroit's Young Talent (GDYT) is a citywide summer jobs program that trains and employs young adults between the ages of 14 and 24 for up to 120 hours. Youth participants must be permanent residents of the City of Detroit and be eligible to work in the United States. There are a broad range of jobs available to the participants. Examples of jobs include: community cleanups, event planning, accounting, retail and the Junior Police or Fire Cadets to name a few. Last year, over 8,000 local youth received employment, which is our goal again this year.

The <u>online portal</u> is now open for applications and will close on May 31.

TALK TO US! Letter to the Editor

One of our goals is to make *The Morningsider* more interactive and resident-driven. To that end, we invite you to send us your ideas and opinions – what do you like about the newsletter, what should we be paying more attention to, what pressing issues are Detroiters facing? Please keep your communications brief - about 200 words - and respectful in tone. Send your comments to morningsidecommunity2@gmail.com. Letters, edited as necessary for space and clarity, will be published each month.

Continued... St. Matthew's Parish Receives National Recognition as Historic Site

The church and rectory were constructed in the 1950s in a modern Romanesque architectural style – a compilation of rock-faced crab orchard stone, limestone, and red granite.

This was a unique period in church design when many architects were moving to more modern styles. St. Matthew Parish still has the grandeur of more traditional churches in Detroit but embraces a more streamlined design, evident in its front entry outlined in simple red granite.

This was a unique period in church design when many architects were moving to more modern styles. St. Matthew Parish still has the grandeur of more traditional churches in Detroit but embraces a more streamlined design, evident in its front entry outlined in simple red granite.

The decision to apply for National Historic Tax credits was an "evolutionary one," parishioner David Smydra told me. David has been active since he joined St. Matthew's in 1978. He was one of the main players in the application process for the National Register.

In 2000, St. Matthew Parish agreed to let Detroit Public Schools (DPS) take over St. Matthew's school, renaming it Maya Angelou Academy. At that time DPS was looking for more space for students to serve the influx of families moving into the city due to an increase in housing loans. St. Matthew was also having a hard time keeping up with the school as parishioner membership declined.

It seemed to be a win for both parties, until 2008 when the housing market crashed, with severe implications for everyone. The school closed for good, but the community of St. Matthew Parish was determined to maintain the building, knowing that upkeep and appearance were important to the neighborhood.

Since 2008, St. Matthew's parish has dedicated many resources to this effort, waiting for the right opportunity that fit their mission of providing religious services, social services, and promoting community activity.



St. Matthews school entrance off Audubon Rd. Image courtesy of Rachel Pisano

Around 2020 that opportunity arrived. Catholic Charities of Southeastern Michigan (CCSEM) asked if they would be interested in converting the school building and activities center into affordable housing units. High quality, safe, and affordable housing is a priority for Catholic Charities USA across the country.

The parish was enthusiastic about the project. Applying to be on the National Register of Historic Places was key to its success, as being accepted would allow for additional funding through historic tax credits.

Story continues on page 8...

Is the Land Value Tax Good for Morningsiders? Part II

Susan Newell | The Morningsider

You can expect to hear much more over the coming months as champions and critics of the Mayor's proposed land value tax have their say. In last month's newsletter, I laid out the basics of how a land value tax (LVT) would work - doubling taxes on all land and reducing taxes on buildings to incentivize vacant land owners to develop their holdings while giving homeowners a tax break. You can read that article here.

The major concern expressed by critics is that the LVT would create a devastating wave of property tax foreclosures. To address that concern, Alex Alsup, VP of Research & Development at Regrid, a nation-wide storehouse of property data and property tax expert, laid out a worst-case scenario in a Substack piece recently.

He looked at vacant residential land, which he sees as the most vulnerable to tax foreclosure. Because they have a lower market value than vacant commercial land, the owners are more likely to walk away in the face of higher taxes. (Keep in mind that up to four side lots owned by residents are not included in the LVT.)

For those who like data, here are some numbers to consider. Of the 56,000 privately-owned parcels of vacant land in the city, about 20,000 (36%) of those are owned either by outside speculators, businesses, or investors. The total tax bill last year for those 20,000 properties was about \$9 million. Under the LVT, owners of those parcels would owe almost twice as much (\$17.5 million) under a land value tax. This \$17.5 million represents only about 3.5% of the city's total property tax levy of \$500 million.

Alex says it's highly unlikely that investors sitting on large contiguous tracts of land would just walk away from those properties and let them go into foreclosure. But for the sake of argument, let's say that every owner of every one of those 20,000 parcels stops paying taxes. It would mean a loss of less than 4% of the city's property tax revenue.

Many people believe, as I did, that property taxes make up a majority of the city budget; in fact, only about 10-15% of the city's revenue comes from property taxes.

Another important consideration, according to Alex, is that "....tax decreases on occupied homes – which make up a far larger source of delinquency today than vacant land hypothetically could under the LVT – would offset hypothetical delinquency increases on vacant land." In addition, he thinks it's likely that with lower property taxes for 97% of homeowners, you'll see fewer homeowners forced into foreclosure, more residents paying, and paying on time.

Another objection to the LVT raised in an article by Russ Bellant in the Metro Times in January is that the land value tax is allegedly unconstitutional. To address that issue I turned to John Mogk, Wayne State University law professor who has taught property law and urban land use. He's also written extensively on tax reform in Detroit.

Prof. Mogk said that the constitutionality of the land value tax will depend upon the preferences and biases of the Michigan Supreme Court. "In my view," he says, "residents should not be concerned with the constitutionality of LTV, but whether it makes good policy at this time, as opposed to greater tax relief for homeowners. There can only be one bite out of the apple.

Story continues on page 7...

Water Service Line Program Expanded in Morningside

Eric Dueweke | The Morningsider

As reported at the February membership meeting and in last month's Morningsider, the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) is now replacing lead water service lines in a large section of our neighborhood. This month, DWSD is expanding the program to include six additional Morningside streets.

Lead service line replacement includes replacing the lead line with a new copper pipe from the City's water main (located in the street) into the resident's house to the water meter. The first phase of the program in our area includes houses on Balfour, Chatsworth, Berkshire and Buckingham between Mack and East Warren.

Beginning on March 11, exploratory digging in front yards will begin along Haverhill, Devonshire, Bedford, Three Mile, Courville and Audubon. As shown on the map, this expansion area will also span from Mack to East Warren. Information packages have been placed on front doors of all houses within this perimeter, and DWSD representatives are scheduled to describe the program and answer questions at the March 12 Morningside general meeting. The work of actually replacing the service lines will likely begin in May.

For more information about the Lead Service Line Replacement Program, please check out the DWSD website at www.detroitmi.gov/lslr. The phone number is (313) 880-2812. Morningside is one of the first east side neighborhoods to benefit from this federally-funded program.

Morningside Extension (D4)

Selected Site
Parcels
District Boundaries
Original LSLR Site

Warren

Comwall

Munich

Haverhill

Waveney

Original
Morningside
LSLR Site

Bremen

Devonshire

Bremen

Devonshire

Brunswick

Brunswick

Mack

Work to replace lead service lines has now begin to shift into the eastern portion of Morningside. Image courtesy of DWSD

Eric Dueweke, President of MCO

Continued... Is the Land Value Tax Good for Morningsiders? Part II

LTV is not a big enough bite to make a significant difference and it will not result in any significant development of vacant land. Vacant land is not being developed today, because the cost of development exceeds the market price in neighborhoods, as well as downtown, where enormous subsidies are being provided to make up the difference. Taxing vacant land will not increase market demand for developed projects."

It you'd like to hear more of Professor Mogk's proposals for fixing Detroit's tax system, you can listen to Detroit Today host Stephen Henderson's interview with him on WDET in November.

Alex Alsup also feels that the Mayor's LVT plan doesn't go far enough to really spur development of Detroit's vast vacant landscape. Taxes on land would have to be much higher, he says, to adequately incentivize big developers to start doing something productive on their land. He says that there are other tools, like zoning reform, that could also be used to spur development.

On the other hand, he does see a real benefit of the LVT for individual homeowners, and so supports the LVT for that reason. "I don't think I've ever agreed with (the Mayor) on a property tax issue before," he says, "but I do think he's right on this one."

If you have thoughts on the LVT, we're happy to print them in an upcoming issue of the newsletter. Just send them to morningsidecommunity2@gmail.com.

Susan Newell, retired nurse and resident of MorningSide since 1984. Serves as the Associate Editor of The Morningsider

More than 30 Activities for the Whole Family at Jefferson Branch Library

Jefferson Branch Library | Content Partners

Spring is really busting out at the Jefferson Branch these days. So many programs are coming up between now and June that we can't list all of them here, which is why DeAidre "Dee" Jones, Manager at the Jefferson library, is offering a complete schedule of activities which you can access with one simple click. Jefferson | Detroit Public Library Events - 37 Upcoming Activities and Tickets | Eventbrite



Jefferson Branch Library. Image courtesy of Detroit Public Library

Continued... St. Matthew's Parish Receives National Recognition as Historic Site

The other building on campus is the Bishop Donnelly Activities Building, constructed in 1966 as support for school, parish, and community functions. Over the years both the school and activities building have hosted a variety of school and parish events, including the Boy Scouts and sporting events.

The church had reliable historic documentation and many original blueprints of each building, which helped the process go smoothly. It also had help from Cinnaire, a development company experienced with these applications and affordable housing projects.

David said that being accepted onto the National Register is "a powerful statement bearing in mind that St. Matthew's has a century long legacy in the Morningside community." He tells me "The motto at St. Matthew's is 'a beacon of light and a sign of hope".

This designation as a historic site will help pave the way for the parish to continue to be a sign of hope for the community.

Rachel Pisano, passion for architecture, design, and more



St. Matthew Parish entrance off Whittier Ave. Image courtesy of St. Matthew's

Successful Coffee X Vibes Gathering is Just The Beginning

Jeffrey D. Lewis II | The Morningsider

Everything that was originally envisioned for Morningside Cafe comes to fruition daily. You may ask what that vision was? The short end of that answer is rather simple: To Unify. Last month's inaugural *Coffee x Vibes* gathering was nothing less than a success!

Nearly sixty individuals walked through our door during the scheduled time frame on a Saturday morning in February.

A diverse crowd congregated with one another and enjoyed the ambiance that our establishment provides. Morningside Cafe has so much in store for the future.

All we will say right now is to stay tuned!



Attendees enjoy the warm atmosphere of Morningside Cafe. Image courtesy of Mark Rutherford

Jeffrey D. Lewis II, Editor in Chief of The Morningsider, 2nd VP of MCO, and Owner of Morningside Cafe

Morningsider Survey

Jeffrey D. Lewis II | The Morningsider

We are very proud of our monthly newsletter, the Morningsider! The Morningsider allows us to share newsworthy stories taking place right here in Morningside, and our surrounding communities.

As we continue to look for ways to improve the newsletter, feedback from our audience is always welcomed. That's why we have provided a survey as we want to gain direct insight from you, our readers.

Do you have a favorite feature that appears in the Morningsider? Is there something that you would like to see added or maybe even removed entirely? Here is your opportunity to voice your thoughts.

Please click here to access the survey.



Survey checked off. Image courtesy of iStock photos

Eastside Community Network Helps Promote Digital Equity

The Morningsider

Many low-income Detroiters have no computers and little or no internet access. In today's digital world, that means extra barriers to accessing education, employment, and social programs. In a new effort to help level the digital playing field, the city's Office of Digital Equity & Inclusion has recently launched eight new "certified tech hubs" throughout the city. One is located just west of Morningside, at the Stoudamire Wellness Center at Eastside Community Network, 4401 Conner, just south of E. Warren.

Morningside is fortunate to have computers at the Jefferson Branch Library available for use by residents and internet access at the Morningside Café. But the Stoudamire's certified tech hub offers even more services, including computers to for residents to borrow, and computer training for those who aren't as internet-savvy as they would like to be.

Technology 101, designed to teach basic computer skills, is offered there every Tuesday from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m.

For more information or to register, contact Myla Chapman at **(313) 484-3206** or mchapman@ecn-detroit.org.

You can read more about the citywide program here in Model D, one of Detroit's excellent online magazines.



Technology 101 flyer. Image courtesy of ECN

City Budget Hearings Begin – Let Your Voice Be Heard!

The Morningsider

Last Friday, Mayor Duggan gave the City Council his executive recommendations for the 2024-2025 budget. You can read a report on his recommendations in Bridge Detroit here. From now until April 8, when Council takes the final vote on the budget, it's important to study the details of the proposed budget and advocate for your own priorities and those of your community.

Non-profit organizations like Community Development Advocates of Detroit (CDAD) are working to make sure residents understand the budget process and are prepared to weigh in. Here are the <u>presentation slides</u> from a recent CDAD training meeting, which explain how the budget process works, where the revenues come from, and how they are allocated.

From March 11 to April 1, Council has scheduled departmental budget hearings, where department heads appear before Council to answer questions about their own proposed budgets. All of these meetings are open to the public, either in person or virtually. Here is the 2024-2025 Budget Hearing Schedule.

If you can only attend one meeting, probably the most important one will be the Public Budget Hearing on Monday, April 1 at 5:00 p.m.

You can attend budget hearings in person on the 13th floor of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, online at detroitmi.gov/Online-CC-Meeting or by phone by calling one of these numbers - 929-436-2866, 312-626-6799, 669-906-6833, 253-215-8782, 301-715-8592, or 346-248-7799, and entering meeting ID 85846903626##.

Agendas and related documents can be found and viewed <u>here</u>. (If you need help, click <u>here</u> to view a video on how to locate Agendas and Minutes.)

According to a recent CDAD newsletter, "Council may change how it handles public comment during this year's budget process. Previously, Council generally had a public comment period for each budget hearing. Council may hold one morning public comment period and one afternoon public comment period. If this change is made, this would place an undue burden and possible barrier to the public's ability to comment on the City's budget and participate in the entire process. We have asked Council and the City Clerk to clarify and communicate if the public comment period is changed.

"Three things you should know about making public comment during the budget process.

- 1. The Budget Schedule is subject to change– hearings and sessions may start earlier,later or be rescheduled.
- 2. It is within the discretion of the chairperson to determine when to hear public comment during the meeting and the length of each comment.
- 3. Sometimes Administration and department officials are not available during public comment they don't hear the public commenters' questions nor respond to them."

Sign up to receive CDAD's budget campaign emails by visiting https://cdad-online.org/. Now through April 8, if you can't attend any budget hearings, you can still call or email the Mayor's office and our District 4 Council Member, Latisha Johnson at 313-224-4841 or (councilmemberjohnson@detroitmi.gov), and share your views with friends, neighbors and colleagues on social media.

Let's Talk Trash

The Morningsider

Don't let those leaf bags sitting at your neighbor's curb fool you. They won't be picked up until April, when yard waste collection begins. In Morningside, the first collection isn't until Thursday, April 11, so please don't put yard waste out before April 10. And when you do, make sure they're in paper bags, not plastic bags!

Your next three bulk trash, recycling, and yard waste collections are:

Thursday, March 25 Thursday, April 11 Thursday, April 25



A collection of lawn leaf bags. Image courtesy of University District Community Association

Give A Smile, Get A Smile

The Morningsider

How do we learn new things? Usually the hard way. But persistence almost always pays off, as it did for this adorable toddler learning how to navigate a chair.

Click here to watch this baby figure it all out.



Never underestimate the intelligence of an baby. Image courtesy of Tyla Entertainment

Accounting Aid Society Providing Free Tax Preparation Assistance

The Morningsider

No-cost tax preparation services are available for households making less than \$58,000 a year. Services are provided through the IRS's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

Click <u>here</u> to schedule or call 313-556-1920 See current tax site locations <u>here</u> Review <u>this list</u> of items to bring to your appointment.

FUTURE LEADERS

Javelle Hawkins | Contributing Writer

Aisha (Asia) Hinds is an inspiring individual who embraces dedication, compassion, and ambition. She attends East English Village Preparatory Academy @ Finney, where she excels both academically and personally. With her mother and two brothers by her side, she navigates the challenges of her environment with resilience and determination.

Beyond the confines of the classroom, Aisha finds fulfillment in giving back to her community. Her involvement with buildOn, a service learning program for high school students, and particularly her volunteer work in Nicaragua to help build a school for underprivileged communities, showcases her commitment to making a positive impact on the world around her. Despite her busy schedule, which includes balancing academics, volunteering, and a part-time job at Little Caesars, Aisha manages her time effectively.

Aisha's ability to maintain a 3.85 GPA throughout her high school career is a testament to her academic diligence and perseverance. Her academic interests are reflected in her favorite course, AP Precalculus, where she embraces the complexity of mathematical problems with enthusiasm. Her passion for learning and her aspiration to become an Obstetrician Gynecologist are driven by her desire to serve others and make a difference in their lives through medicine. But like so many teenage girls, Aisha has a playful side as well, as you can see from this whimsical selfie.

In her college search, Aisha is drawn to Michigan universities for their affordability and opportunities for academic advancement. Grand Valley State University stands out to her, not only for its size, but also for its attractive scholarship offerings which are in alignment with her goals and aspirations for the future.

Overall, Aisha Hinds exemplifies resilience, compassion, and determination, making her an excellent role model for her peers and a promising future leader in her family, community and beyond.



Aisha Hinds. Image courtesy of Aisha Hinds

Read-a-Thon and Baby Showers at Brilliant Detroit Morningside

Regina Williams | The Morningsider

We are so excited to share some of Brilliant Detroit Morningside's upcoming events for March. March is Reading month so in celebration of reading we will be hosting a READ-A-THON at our hub and we need your help!

The READ- A-THON will be every Friday this month from 4:30-6:00pm (on 3/8, 3/15, 3/22 and 3/29). We will have four reading stations where one of our adult volunteers (hopefully YOU) will read your favorite childhood story to groups of children.

What's needed: You and your hard copy book! Please give us a call at (313) 528-7217 or email me at rwilliams@brilliantdetroit.org with your questions and to sign up today!

We are also looking for sponsors for our March and April Community Baby Showers. Sponsors would provide new or very gently used baby items such as: car seats, walkers, bibs, baby wipes, baby clothing, blankets, cribs, crib sheets, and other baby items. We have 10 moms registered for each shower.

Regina Williams, Community Engagement Manager at Brilliant Detroit



St. Clare of Montefalco 16362 Mack corner of East Outer Drive Grosse Pointe, MI. 48230

Diabetes, Cholesterol and kidney Function Screening, Blood Pressure Screening, Covid-19 Vaccinations & Boosters, Covid Testing and other Health Screenings.

Social Distancing and Masks are optional.

A Bag of fresh groceries for those in need will be provided.





meridianhealth













For more information visit our web site www.unifydetroitcoalition.org or call 313-418-3049

Resources & Upcoming Events

The Morningsider







Resources & Upcoming Events

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