

Candidate Bios

Crystal Meriwether, District 17 Resident, Business Owner

I have lived as a homeowner in St. Paul since 1978; in downtown since 1990. Now retired, I am volunteering to share my expertise and skills gained as an educational administrator, a national / international educational / management consultant, and as a U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officer, by serving on the CapitolRiver Council board. For the past two years I have observed and participated in various CRC committees, and would now like to be more involved in helping shape the future of District 17 by serving on the board.

Vicki Plaistow, District 17 Resident and Employee

I work and live in downtown Saint Paul. Lowertown, specifically, has shown so much wonderful change in the past few years and that excites me. There are so many amazing opportunities for this community to grow and connect and I am honored to be a part of that as a resident and employee. I would also take great pride in contributing to the changes in a professional manner by continuing to serve as a CapitolRiver Council Board Member and Treasurer. I know as a resident and an employee of the City of Saint Paul, that there are issues and improvements needed in our community. I have a Master's degree in Nonprofit Management and have served on other nonprofit organization's boards, providing educational and experiential contributions. My career in accounting and finance is very solid, which qualifies me to help contribute to offer sound fiscal guidance.

Sandra Erickson, District 17 Resident, Business Owner and Property Owner

I have been both a Lowertown resident and an owner/manager of the Allen Building, an historic commercial / residential building, for about 18 years. I have served as a CRC board member for 4 years, and I have served on the Bylaws, Public Realm, and Policy and Procedures committees. I believe we have made great progress as an organization, and I am seeking to be elected for a third term so that I can serve on other committees and continue participating in discussions about how we can continue to improve our community.

As a resident and building owner, that gives me a unique perspective and understanding of the downtown and its positives and negatives. When businesses or residents are considering moving to downtown, they need to feel safe and proud of their surroundings. A previous job gave me an opportunity to travel extensively to a variety of cities, large and small, all over the world. This has given me unlimited ideas on what has made certain of these cities more successful, economically sound and welcoming than others. We need open and honest discussion amongst a diverse group of people to allow for sound decisions. I

would like to be a part of future positive outcomes and am certain I can contribute to that end.

Lupe Castillo, District 17 Resident

I am deeply committed to the idea of "Loving where you Live and Work." We must engage, participate, support and invest in St. Paul. I believe we can achieve a welcoming, inclusive and thriving Downtown/Lowertown district by engaging residents, business and property owners. Previous Board President experience has provided initiatives that were implemented on a national level, transition leadership to restructure and reaffirm the organizational capacity and racial equity within economic and community development. My three top priorities are:

Increase and deepen our engagement and representation of diversity, inclusivity and equity. District 17 has a beautiful, deeply multicultural landscape. We can nourish connectivity of all voices, therefore strengthening our vision of a strong St Paul. With multiple lenses, challenges will be seen as opportunities for growth. With diverse community voices, we can continue to see Downtown/Lowertown as a place to call home.

Community and economic development that will enhance the quality of life including small business development by residents to broaden economic diversity. We can build sustainable and responsible development that uplifts our CRC's residents, businesses, artists, owners and entrepreneurs. Our development work must be centered around healthy communities with green space and sustainable transportation, that fosters a thriving diverse community.

CapitolRiver Council Board representation with innovative talent development that is responsive, dynamic and equitable will help us grow the capacity of CRC's Board. I am committed to strengthening CRC's relationship with our City Council to share talents and community-powered solutions for Our St. Paul.

I believe together we can create a CapitolRiver District and City of St. Paul that is Our St. Paul!

Jauston-Charles Campbell, District 17 Employee

I describe myself as a Minnesota nomad. I currently live in Saint Paul, graduated from Apple Valley school in 2009 and have lived in: Richfield, Bloomington, Woodbury, Cottage Grove, Burnsville, Savage, and Minneapolis. I earned an A.A. in 2013 from Minneapolis Community and Technical College, and in 2015 graduated with a Bachelor's degree in screenwriting.

While at Metropolitan State University I served as president of film club, volunteered at CommonBond Communities, local theaters, and I have received nominations for my work in film. I currently manage an apartment complex in downtown Saint Paul while pursuing an M.S. in technical communication. Throughout my

career I've held positions that wouldn't function without proper communication. Serving and consulting others, I generate business with positive energy, collaboration, and the ability to effectively complete tasks. I would love to use my skills to improve communication and engagement throughout District 17.

John Ganey, District 17 Resident

I am a new resident to St. Paul, having moved downtown from Mankato in April 2017. I'm interested in both seeing and helping downtown St. Paul thrive and become what will be an even more exciting and vibrant place. Serving now on the board for the Friends of Pedro Park Expansion, I am working to both save and expand that park. I also currently serve as President for the Rock Bend Folk Festival, now in its 28th year, which puts on an arts and music festival on the weekend after Labor Day every year in St. Peter, MN. I'm retired after working for 40 years in human services at the Harry Meyering Center in Mankato. I served on the board of SCOPE (South Central Organization of Providers to Education), a non-profit organization which created and put on educational conference for staff in counties and human services organizations from 1991 to 2016. Master's Degree in Sociology from Minnesota State University, Mankato, and BA in English and History from St. Mary's University.

Chris Smith, District 17 Resident

After several years living in an east metro suburb, I decided that I wanted live in a city that was vibrant and offered multi-modal transportation options (Minneapolis or Saint Paul). Most of the developments in Minneapolis had many amenities and of course, lakes and bike trails —it seemed like the perfect place. When I began to explore parking in downtown, living in Minneapolis seemed to be problematic. So I started looking around Saint Paul. I checked out the Midway, Como, and the West Side, but landed in downtown —Lowertown. I wished I had started there first, since it offered more than what I could find in Minneapolis. Bike trails, the Farmers Market, Art Crawls, Jazz Festivals, Blues Festivals, and so on. Me and my 10 year-old water spaniel, Brady, decided the Cosmopolitan was the best location since it was right next to Mears Park. I quickly realized Lowertown was very different from most downtown neighborhoods. People are connected and care for the community. As an organizer, I have quickly learned through issue and political campaigns, the cares and concerns throughout Ward 2. In Lowertown, housing is an issue at the forefront, mainly because the neighborhood at one time had the largest concentration of artists in the state and now are being priced out of their homes and studios. Living in an arts community was something that appealed to me, and now it's being threatened. While serving on the CRC Board, it is my hope to build a vibrant downtown while preserving its cultural integrity. I want our community to remain unique and not become a suburb that moved to the city. As a community organizer by trade,

while serving on the board, I will commit to community engagement and make sure CRC's voice is heard.

Amy Lee, District 17 Resident and Employee

As a resident and employee of the downtown Saint Paul area, I am invested in helping support a vibrant community. Currently I'm the Development Director at the James J. Hill Center where we work to build community and entrepreneurs. Previously, I served as the Executive Director of the hip hop organization Funk-SOUL Patrol, where I found my passion for community organizing and mobilizing to bring change. I've working for a variety of nonprofits including: Page Education Foundation, Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota. I received my Master's in Advocacy and Political Leadership and have over 10 years of nonprofit experience working to bridge community, business, corporations and nonprofits.

Will Travis, District 17 Resident

My interest in the CRC Board stems from my introduction to the Council through my wife and have since become a member of the Skyway Governance Advisory Committee. I have lived Downtown for six years. During that time, I have started my family and brought my mother to the neighborhood, providing me with an experience of our home through multiple stages of life. I have nearly 10 years of experience investigating financial crimes and compliance on fraud-related matters with a couple of the leading financial institutions in the Twin Cities area and have served as treasurer for the local chapter of a financial crimes investigators' association. My experience in assisting victims, working major cases, staying current with regulations and compliance issues, and living in Downtown with my family will provide a unique perspective to the board. I am committed to improving our quality of life in our neighborhood.

Alesia G. Thompson, District 17 Employee

I am a motivated, personable business professional with a successful 16-year civil service career ranging from city, county, state and federal agencies / entities utilizing skills in financial management, principles and practices of strategic planning, and project management. I have lived and or worked within the City of Saint Paul since relocating from Ohio in 2007. I am a mother and co-parent with my fiance to three children 21, 18 and 15. As a woman of faith and a lesbian woman of color I bring a radical perspective of hospitality and openness to everything I do. My goal in seeking membership on the CRC board is to utilize my skills and professional experiences fostering open, honest, and transparent dialogue that leads to community-changing behaviors.

Bill Huepenbecker, District 17 Employee

I work downtown for the Minnesota Wild and serve as the Senior Director of Planning and Public Affairs. I direct the

organization's public affairs efforts and spearhead projects related to the management and sustainability of the Xcel Energy Center, Saint Paul RiverCentre and its associated factions. That includes working with other groups to improve the vitality of the downtown.

Prior to that, I was Executive Director for the St. Paul RiverCentre Authority where I managed the merger of the RiverCentre Authority and the St. Paul Convention & Visitors Bureau, today known as Visit Saint Paul. I also previously served as Director of Intergovernmental Relations for the City of St. Paul where I acted as the lead lobbyist to pass legislation to build the Xcel Energy Center, and for the first time ever, secured funding for brownfields cleanup and the reuse of industrial property. I also played a key role in securing federal and state funding to build Phalen Boulevard on the east side of St. Paul.

I am currently an appointed CRC board member and Skyway Governance Advisory Committee member, and I am seeking election so that I can continue to be involved in CRC's work.

Jonathan Reisetter, District 17 Resident and Property Owner

After graduating from the University of Minnesota, I spent 12 years working as an independent contractor building golf courses across the U.S. and in a few different countries. Along the way, I learned to appreciate how unique and similar various places could be, which would inspire a future career in civic development. In 2013 I made downtown St. Paul home while continuing to travel for work, and in 2017 I enrolled at the U of M's Humphrey School of Public Affairs, where I am currently pursuing a master's degree in urban and regional planning. I'm enjoying the simple pleasures of being home full-time: spending more time with family and friends, going to events, volunteering in the community, and finally getting to know the local golf courses. Respecting how much downtown St. Paul has changed over the past couple of decades, I am interested in continuing to push the design and planning envelope further. Are publicly owned parcels being used to improve the community right now, and how can we enhance interim placemaking for the public good? What barriers do developers see with downtown and how can we address them? What kinds of developments are overextending themselves, perhaps to the detriment of other options? With questions like these, I hope to challenge existing expectations for the district and learn from the diverse range of perspectives and practices which have made the area unique. I'm originally from Lewiston, MN, and one of my favorite travel memories is of spontaneously riding bikes with friends through the busy round-about around the Arc du Triomphe in Paris.

I would like to serve on the Public Realm Committee.

Tom Erickson, District 17 Resident, Business Owner and Property Owner

I am a Lowertown resident and building owner. I strongly believe the downtown area of Saint Paul has tremendous unrealized upside potential. This inspired me four years ago to run as a board member for the CapitolRiver Council – to influence positive development of our downtown area.

A particular area of concern of mine is parking. We must support every opportunity to add or prevent the loss of convenient and economical parking options. Other important keys for the success of our downtown neighborhood are attractive, well-maintained buildings, skyways and streets, which also have very low crime. After graduation from the University of Minnesota, I was a pilot in the USAF, the Iowa Air National Guard and also a pilot with Northwest Airlines for over 30 years. After retiring I began a second career as CEO of UltiMed, Inc., a successful medical device company. I recently retired from that position. For the past year I have been the Board Chair for CRC. We have made many changes including the implementation of the new Bylaws, revising Policies and Procedures and other constructive changes.

I serve on the Downtown Alliance committee that is focused on creating a Special Services District. I hope to continue serving on the CRC board so that I can serve as a liaison and provide updates to the board on that effort, and help identify ways that CRC can maximize the potential of that organization as an effective partner. The development of a partnership between the Downtown Alliance and the CapitolRiver Council has exciting potential. I am asking for your vote so I can serve a third term as a board member of our district council.

Tiffany Brace, District 17 Employee and Business Owner

I am a passionate, urban-focused Commercial Real Estate Agent concentrating in Downtown Saint Paul. Having lived in Minneapolis and Denver most of my life I became a proud resident of the North Como neighborhood in St Paul nine years ago. After becoming a licensed CRE agent in Minnesota in April of 2017 I joined CRC's Development Review Committee, which has been great, because that has allowed me to hear concerns and ideas from downtown residents. I love everything Saint Paul, especially District 17, and I'm dedicated to doing all I can to focus on assuring positive growth and improvement in downtown. Businesses, residents and government officials need to work together and listen to each other in order for that to happen, and I'm eager to continue being involved in those conversations as a CRC board member.

Other community organizations I am actively involved in are Greater Saint Paul BOMA, 4th Street Market District, Frogtown Neighborhood Association, Saint Paul Chamber of Commerce, Midway Chamber of Commerce and MNCAR.