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A West Side Story Continues

Editor's Note: This is the second of a two part series.

From a sometimes tumultuous history and at times a derided neighborhood, St. Paul's West Side has developed into a flourishing community with a strong sense of self and a clear picture of its future.

and Sheila Wellstone Center for Community Building to make room for its many programs and rapid growth.

La Clinica, another long time West Side staple, has also built a new building to accommodate its growing number of patients.

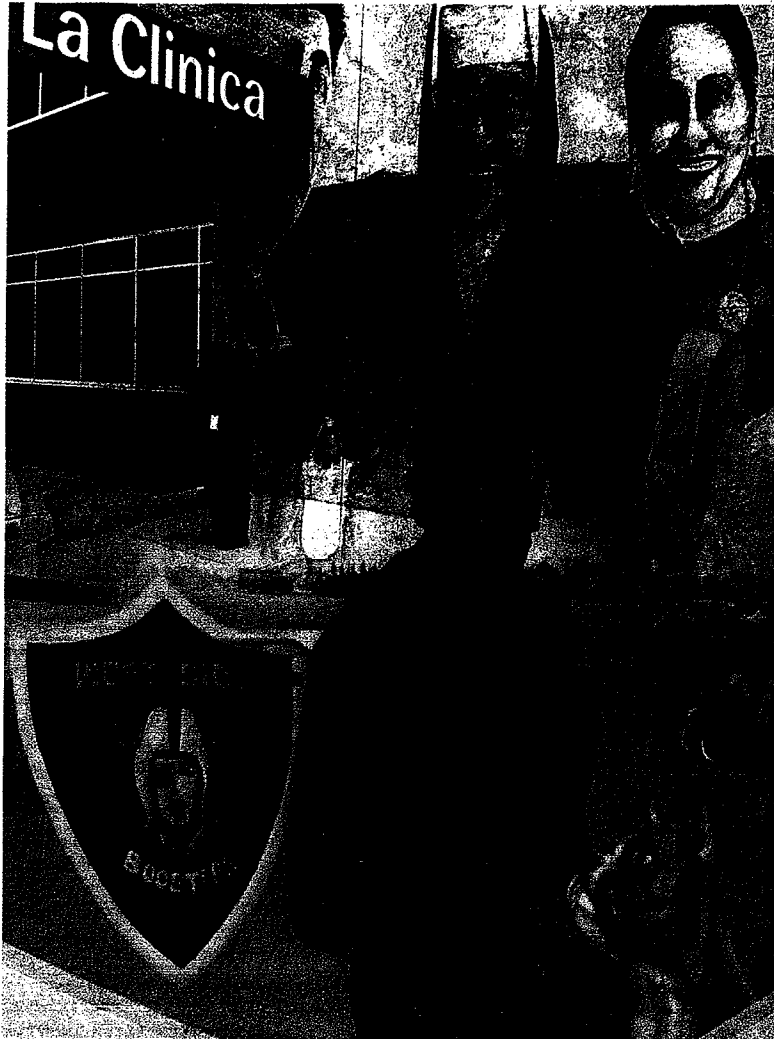
Minnie Cardenas, patient services representative at La Clinica says, "Everyday we have new patients."

These two agencies are only the beginning, says Gilbert De La O of Neighborhood House.

A lifelong resident and member of a family that has lived and worked on the West Side for five generations, De La O is excited by the changes,

"We lost a generation of our youth that moved to other parts of the city and county because of the lack of homes in the community to raise their families," he said. "Too often we need to leave our community to enjoy other neighborhood amenities. Now we are going to have them in our own back yard."

"There is so much richness to the West Side," says Maritza Mariani, Associate Director of Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA), and wife of State Representative Carlos Mariani. "The West Side is home to many parks, walking paths, and bluffs. We also have the river, which means that some mornings, I can walk over the high bridge and see an



Gilbert De La O

By Tatum Fjerstad

The Times They are A' Changing

The past few years have seen - and continue to see - incredible change in the West Side.

Neighborhood House, a more than 100-year-old non-profit organization that calls the West Side home, will soon

The construction of more single family homes looks to build on the community's ability to meet the demand for affordable housing.

Education too, is a top priority, "Humboldt High School has a new principal (John S. Bianchi) that our community hopes will rejuvenate the strong school spirit, the strong competitive athletic teams, and the strong ties with the community that was the history of Humboldt," says De La O.

Maria Castro, principal of Roosevelt Elementary School says "The future of the community is involving our youth and new families. It is very important that we embrace our new immigrants. They are the new wave of West Siders who will continue the legacy of a great community."

A Tradition of Pride looks to the Future

The West Side has numerous qualities that drive its residents to continue to contribute to the community.

De La O says he is "moved by the traditions, reputation, and pride that are had by those living in this community."

Cardenas says "It's a little community inside itself. It used to be that everyone

"The West Side is home to many parks, walking paths, and bluffs. We also have the river, which means that some mornings, I can walk over the high bridge and see an eagle."

-Maritza Mariani, Associate Director of Neighborhood Development Alliance

knew everyone, even though that has changed, it still remains neighborly."

While each resident shares the pride that supports the future of the West Side community, each resident has his/her own separate desire for the road ahead.

"I look forward to the continued growth, but not too much," she adds. "I would like to see the small town feel continue."

Mariani agrees. "I look forward to a stable, healthy West Side, where individuals and families continue to settle in. A community where our elderly feel safe walking in our neighborhoods, where people can sit in front of their homes and talk to one another. A community that continues to work in positive partnerships with the Police department, the City and

government social agencies."

"We need to continue to address the needs of the families who are most in need," she adds. "Our community has single moms, who struggle to make ends meet. We have undocumented families who are struggling not only due to language barrier, but for lack of food, and housing. There are families who are being taken advantage of by financial institutions and landlords due to lack of information."

Elsa Vega-Perez of the Bremer Otto Foundation says it is important "To ensure that we maintain our cultural identity. With the branding of District del Sol, and Cesar Chavez Street, we [have to] take action to continue our Latino heritage."

De La O adds "I'm hoping that our families and youth will develop the same strong "esprit de corps" that my generation and my parent's generation held for the West Side. Hopefully they too will develop the strong community identity, traditions, history, and pride that many of us still wear on our sleeves."

To find out more about what is happening in the West Side go to www.districtdelsol.com

A West Side Story...

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