

LISA NELSON

432 Herschel St, Saint Paul MN | lisa.clare.nelson@gmail.com | lisaclarenelson.com

Dear Saint Paul City Council Members,

I am writing in application for the position of Interim City Councilmember for Ward 4. Regardless of whether I'm chosen for this interim position, I have zero intention to run in the upcoming Ward 4 special election. Furthermore, if I am appointed as interim City Councilmember I will refrain completely from publicly commenting on or endorsing any of the candidates running for election.

I have been a resident of Ward 4 since 2013, when I moved home to my native state after a decade on the east coast. I chose my neighborhood for its proximity to the soon-to-open Green Line light rail, and first became familiar with Union Park District Council during planning for the MLS soccer stadium a half mile from my house. As I've gotten more involved in local politics, I've come to appreciate the impact and meaning of people in the community taking action, investing time, and caring for their neighbors.

I see the Interim Ward 4 position an opportunity to step up and offer my time and experience in leadership, policy, and collaboration to the constituents of Ward 4.

Leadership: I'm willing to take the initiative to get things going and keep things running. I have chaired committees and task forces. I've organized and presented at numerous community meetings, including initiating regular meetings about soccer game-day transportation issues between neighborhood stakeholders, MNUFC and Allianz Field staff, Saint Paul Police Department, and city staff and elected officials.

Policy: In short, I'm kind of a geek about planning and policy in general, and the city of Saint Paul specifically. I'm interested in planning and zoning (the current book I'm reading is about zoning policy!) and have a favorite obscure city ordinance (did you know you're not allowed to shoot arrows in the street?).

I have corresponded and worked productively with city staff from a variety of departments, connected community members with information or contacts at the city, and become familiar with city ordinances, policies, and code enforcement.

My email inbox is full of updates from city subscription lists, and I regularly follow the actions taken by the Board of Zoning Appeals, Planning Commission, and Audit Committee. I have read many of the city's plans, including the Pedestrian, Bike, Climate Action and Resilience, and Transportation Safety Action plans, and reports including the Audit Committee's Constituent and Customer Services Report. I have attended community meetings for the city budget and followed the budget process.

Collaboration: I genuinely enjoy group projects and collaboration, and believe that putting in the effort to find common ground between different perspectives results in stronger work. I am currently working on the Snelling & University Alliance, a collaboration between Union Park

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District Council, Hamline Midway Coalition, Midway Chamber of Commerce, and African Economic Development Solutions. I have also worked on collaborative projects with representatives from other District Councils, including Saint Anthony Park Community Council, Highland District Council, and Macalester Groveland Community Council.

I have collaborated and worked productively with people who don't all agree. I know from experience that not everyone will be happy when tough decisions have to be made, but it is possible for everyone to feel that their ideas have been given a fair hearing even if they're disappointed with the results.

Hitting the ground running: Often the people who can make a real difference are those who have the time to show up, and who are ready to jump in and do the work and get things done efficiently. In my previous career as an Art Conservator, most of my work was in short-term contract positions which required getting up to speed and working effectively as quickly as possible.

As a stay-at-home-parent, I experienced dealing with stressful and quickly-changing situations and learning new skills on the fly. Now that my kids are school-aged and I am returning to full-time work, I have the time and energy to devote to serving Ward 4 until the special election this fall.

I'm qualified, ready, and able to take this opportunity to show up and do the work. Most of all, I truly LOVE the city of Saint Paul and believe in the ability of city government to effectively serve its residents. I would be honored to be appointed as interim Saint Paul City Councilmember for Ward 4.

Sincerely,

Lisa Nelson

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EXPERIENCE

Union Park District Council

2016 - Present

Board Member (2024 - present)

Transportation Committee Member (2016 - present) and Co-Chair (2022 - present)

- Working to establish the Snelling & University Alliance, advocating for the neighborhood in collaboration with Hamline Midway Coalition, the Midway Chamber of Commerce, and African Economic Development Solutions
- Setting agendas, arranging speakers, running meetings, communicating with and meeting with elected officials and staff, collaborating with other committees and other district councils
- Planning and leading community events, including:
 - Walking tours around Allianz Field (June 2023) and I-94 (September 2023, cosponsored with Saint Anthony Park Community Council) attended by 30+ community members and city, county, and state staff and elected officials
 - Community meeting about Rethinking I-94 (October 2023) attended by 60+ community members
 - Helped to host a community conversation with DSI director Angie Wiese, cosponsored by UPDC and Hamline Midway Coalition (June 2024).
- Meeting 1-2 times yearly with Allianz Field staff and SPPD, and other city department staff as needed, to follow soccer game-day transportation issues
- Attending quarterly Joint Transportation Committees Meetings to collaborate and share information with representatives from other District Councils
- Responding to development plans and community members' questions and concerns relating to city planning, ordinances, zoning, code enforcement, and planning
- Organizing monthly trash cleanups around Snelling & University since 2022

Saint Paul School of Northern Lights

2024 - Present

Board member

- Board Secretary, Chair of Advancement Committee, Chair of Fundraising Task Force
- Grant writing, research, setting agendas and leading committee meetings
- Established a new annual Fall Fundraiser and raised over \$90k in 2024

Neighborhood organizing and advocacy

2020 - Present

- Worked with SPPD to change the block party permit process to allow recurring block parties under a single application in 2022
- Organizing weekly summer block parties and activities since 2021
- Received 3 grants to support block parties, totaling over \$4000
- 3 Capital Improvement Budget community project proposals chosen by the city for funding in 2022 and 2024, totaling over \$200,000
- Wrote articles for streets.mn about block parties, neighborhood history, transportation safety, city policy, and other topics: <https://streets.mn/author/lnelson/>

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EXPERIENCE

Artist **2006 - Present**

- Painting, drawing, graphic design, illustration, web design
- Attended training and workshops in Public Art and Creative Placemaking
- MN State Arts Board Grant Review Panelist, 2023 & 2024

Art Conservator **2007 - 2015**

- Graduate internships and contract work, specializing in preservation of works of art on paper
- Institutions including Brooklyn Museum, American Philosophical Society Library, New-York Historical Society, Jewish Theological Seminary Library, and in private practice

EDUCATION

New York University **2007 - 2011**

MA Art History

Advanced Certificate in Art Conservation

- Research and study of art history and specialized training in the preservation and conservation of works of art on paper, including coursework in chemistry and materials science.
- Passed written translating exams in French and German.
- Published peer-reviewed research papers.

Swarthmore College 2006 **2002 - 2006**

BA Studio Art

- Major in Studio Art with additional coursework in english, writing, art history, linguistics, chemistry, physics, and math.

March 6, 2025

Mayor Melvin Carter
Members of the Saint Paul City Council

Re: Recommendation for Lisa Nelson for interim council member for Ward 4

Dear Mayor and City Council members:

I am writing to offer enthusiastic support for Lisa Nelson as the interim council member for our Ward. I have known Lisa for almost ten years through her work with the Union Park District Council (UPDC).

Lisa has expertly chaired the UPDC transportation committee for several years. She has good ideas and listens to everyone. The agenda and materials always go out on time. She helps us collaborate with other district councils and community partners, and she has solid relationships with staff in Saint Paul Public Works.

Lisa will be great at constituent service. She answers e-mail and returns calls. She follows up and keeps people informed. Lisa is smart and super organized. She gets along with people, makes connections, and helps find solutions to problems.

When community members were dismayed by the volume of trash along University Avenue, Lisa helped organize regular clean-ups. She is working now to establish the Snelling & University Alliance, a collaborative of neighborhood organizations. When MnDOT's ten alternatives for I-94 and its survey instrument were impossible to understand, Lisa designed better graphics and helped to plan and host a big public meeting at a local church where the options were discussed.

She worked with the Saint Paul Police Department to improve the permitting process for recurring block parties. She has written ten CIB proposals, several (in 2022 and 2024) of which were chosen for funding including a city-wide project. Lisa walks the talk on climate – she uses her bicycle for transportation including transporting her kids around our city.

In closing, Lisa would be a great interim council member for Ward 4.

Sincerely,

Barb Thoman
2157 Roblyn Ave
Saint Paul, MN 55104
Phone 651-500-5958

March 12, 2025

TO: City of St. Paul, Ward 4
FR: Amy Gage, agage1014@gmail.com or 612-381-4110
RE: Lisa Nelson, candidate for interim City Council position

Greetings! I am pleased to write a letter in support of Lisa Nelson's candidacy for the interim Ward 4 City Council position, pending an election in fall 2025.

I know Lisa through our collaborative work with Union Park District Council, where I was a board member from 2017 until 2024 and have served directly with Lisa on the UPDC Transportation Committee, which she co-chairs with both professionalism and heart. I also am managing editor at Streets.mn, where Lisa has contributed any number of thought-provoking, well-researched articles — including recently a series she co-authored on the city's Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) process and, significantly, ways to improve it. <https://streets.mn/author/lnelson/>

That last point — that she didn't just highlight problems but enumerated specific ways the CIB could be more equitable and engaging — speaks to who Lisa Nelson is. She is a doer. She gets her hands dirty (including with her organizing of weekly trash pickups for our committee at the University and Snelling intersection). She can both direct work and pitch in herself.

Perhaps my favorite example of Lisa's ethical, inclusive, community-minded spirit is through her efforts to convince the City of Saint Paul to adapt a Play Streets model of block-party organizing.

- An artist by practice, education and training, Lisa created a Play Streets website. <https://stpaulplaystreets.wixsite.com/playstreets>
- She advocated for policies that made it easier for neighbors to block off their streets and get together, allowing children to run more freely and adults to promote safety and community by getting to know one another.
- **A model of calm, nonjudgmental leadership**, Lisa did it all by learning about the current system, demonstrating respect for those who work within it and trying to convince people why there is a better way, one that serves renters as well as homeowners.

I can't speak to Lisa as a mother, a family member, a spouse or a daughter because I don't know her in that realm. But I do know that her family is essential and central to the work she does and the paintings she creates. (Look at the prominence of color, nature and children in her portfolio: <https://www.lisaclarenelson.com/paintings>). And I know that the best story she crafted for Streets.mn was where she illuminated the sorrows and successes of her efforts to be a sustainably minded mother who goes car-free, hauling her children throughout the city on a cargo bike. <https://streets.mn/2023/02/20/car-free-goals-how-to-succeed-through-failure/>

Lisa operates without ego. She would seek to be a learner and collaborator within the City Council team, which has suffered stress in its loss of a transformative leader. Lisa is not political. But she is smart and strategic, hardworking and creative. She'd do well for my ward and for our city. I would be proud to have Lisa Nelson step, however briefly, into Mitra Jalali's shoes.

March 12, 2025

Dear Council members,

We moved into our house at the end of July of 2020. As you might imagine, that was not a great time for getting to know the neighbors. And, yet, I have a vivid memory of a family walking by—parents and two young children. Making sure to keep the standard (more than) six feet between us, we introduced ourselves to one another and we were welcomed to Herschel Street. Yes, that was the day I met Lisa Nelson, who I am honored to endorse as a candidate for the Interim Councilmember for Ward 4 today.

Since that day nearly five years ago, Lisa has worked tirelessly to secure the permits and promote the PlayStreets that have become the heartbeat of the vitality of our little neighborhood, tucked away between I-94 and University Avenue, in Ward 4. Starting with a Covid safe Halloween party, where the proper permits were secured so that the block could be barricaded and the kids could have some semblance of a “normal” Halloween, these block parties have become regular, much anticipated events on our block. Last spring, before the permits had been submitted, several children stood on the sidewalk in front of my house (where the barricades are stored) demanding “BLOCK PARTY! BLOCK PARTY!”

The children think that it is a normal thing to have twice weekly PlayStreet events where they ride their bikes, decorate both street and sidewalk with chalk, invent new games, and tie-dye Herschel Street shirts designed by Lisa and her kids. Our kids know each other, and we know them. The fact that my 9 year-old knows the adults on our block by name, and counts them among those who love and support her, is truly priceless. Lisa Nelson has spearheaded this effort and through her tireless support and quiet, behind-the-scenes work has led the way in creating the beautiful, life-giving neighborhood that I am so proud to call home.

Through her work with the Union Park District Council, particularly with the Transportation committee, Lisa has time and again demonstrated her capacity to research, learn, listen, and share information. Her article, *I-94 in the Union Park District: A History of Prioritizing Speed Over Community*, co-authored with Barb Thoman, is a demonstration of her depth of knowledge of the neighborhood and care for its residents, as well as her ability to collaborate with others. I have witnessed her use this historical insight as a way to build new pathways and imagine possibilities that build on the ever-important human connection that is, at the end of the day, the thing that is most important for the residents in our ward. In this interim, having someone who will listen carefully and thoughtfully, which Lisa does so well, will serve us well.

In addition to the ins and outs of PlayStreets and the history and future possibilities of I-94 in Union Park, Lisa has taught me so much over these years about the place of art in placemaking. I have enjoyed many conversations about the joys of riding her e-bike, nearly year around, with her children in tow...and ridden alongside her to various neighborhood events. Along with other

Transportation committee members, I've picked up trash and gone on neighborhood walking tours with her. She has helped me understand countless city processes and figure out who to call for this, that, or another thing. She is incredibly organized and knowledgeable about the issues that are both real and near and dear to the hearts of many in Ward 4. Her bottomless patience is remarkable. I trust that when Lisa takes something on it will be done well.

I am honored to call Lisa neighbor and friend. I am pleased to offer my endorsement for Lisa Nelson as Interim City Councilmember for Ward 4.

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kirsten Fryer". The signature is written in a light gray or blue ink and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kirsten Fryer
412 Herschel Street
St. Paul, MN 55104