

West Side Community Organization



Dear Julia,

Yesterday, West Side renters showed up powerfully at City Hall to tell our representatives how important it is to keep rent stabilization strong.

"I am not in favor of making changes [to the rent stabilization policy] because it would affect many people like me, my family, my friends, who are low income. My building is in very bad shape: we have pests, the doors don't lock, we've dealt with robberies and assaults, and despite that, they want to raise our rent not 5%, not 6%, but 14%."

—Octavio Garcia, West Side renter and member of the Strykers Unidos tenant union here in our neighborhood.

We spoke out against Ordinance 22-37, which would significantly weaken protections for renters by exempting affordable housing and new construction from the 3% rent cap, and allowing landlords to raise rent in-between tenants.

In response to the lack of transparency and democratic process shown by City Council as they try to walk back the renter protections voted for by the people of Saint Paul, Monica Bravo stated:

"I do not understand what's going on here. I've worked tirelessly alongside other renters like myself across the city to pass the rent stabilization ordinance, and I worked collaboratively with city staff, I worked with the [Mayor's] 41-member stakeholder table, at this point, the only thing I can think to do going further is to actually vote for new councilmembers." — Monica Bravo, WSCO Executive Director

Take action! [Submit a written comment for City Council online.](#)

Learn more, and watch video of these powerful testimonies!

Pictured, above: Monica Bravo with Octavio Garcia and his neighbors, who recently organized the Strykers Unidos tenants union here on the West Side.

[Watch here](#)



WSCO fall calendar preview

Check out this incredible lineup of free fall events coming to our neighborhood!

Recreation as Resistance Saturday, September 10th from 10:30am - 1:30pm at Pickerel Lake in Lilydale Park. Fishing, kayaking, double dutch, skillshares, medicinal plants, healing space, and more! Join us to make our natural places safer spaces for all West Siders, especially Black, indigenous, and people of color.

Fall Harvest Festival Thursday, September 22nd, 6:00pm-8:00pm, top of the Smith Ave. Bridge. Celebrate the work we've done together to advance food justice on the West Side! Join us for a big meal at the Capitol View Communal Garden, and fun activities for the whole family: art, music, and plenty of good conversation.

West Side Best Side! Neighborhood Art Fair Sunday, October 2nd, 12:00pm- 6:00pm in Parque Castillo. Don't miss this fun free festival of food, art, crafts, and music!

Collective Ownership shared education series Sunday, October 23rd, 4:00pm-6:00pm, location TBD. What does community ownership look like in practice here on the West Side? Join us for the first workshop in a series to explore what community ownership means in a way that's rooted in our own histories, cultural practices, and lived experiences.

Stories of Our Past, Visions of Our Future Sunday, November 6th, 4:00pm- 7:00pm, Harriet Island Wigington Pavilion. The West Side Community Organization Annual Meeting is a celebration of our neighborhood and all that we've accomplished together in the past year. Join us for music, food, powerful conversation, and special guest speakers to be announced soon!

[Full Calendar](#)



Incinerator Update

A new incinerator run by the Met Council is planned near the West Side, but first it needs approval from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Join concerned West Siders to meet directly with the MPCA to understand next steps and how we can make our voices heard about the health and environmental impacts of the incinerator.

Learn more or sign up for the meeting by reaching out to Ellie Leonardsmith, WSCO's Health & Environmental Justice Organizer, at elliel@wSCO.org.



Stories from the Flats

"It was like the community was just knocked down because they wanted to knock it down. We didn't know at that time that they were going to bring a freeway through there. Port Authorities came in 1959 and they told us that they were going to buy up the land because the land was no good, and they were going to move us up the hill, and they were going to pay us for the houses, which they didn't." — Linda Castillo de Zambrano, who grew up on the West Side flats before her family's home was destroyed and they were displaced.

Portraits of West Harriet who grew up on the flats will be part of our photo exhibit at our [annual meeting](#) on November 6th at Harriet Island Wigington Pavilion from 4:00pm-7:00pm. Join us to learn from these powerful stories!

Photo: the Lafayette Highway being built, 1965. Minnesota Historical Society.

[Learn more](#)

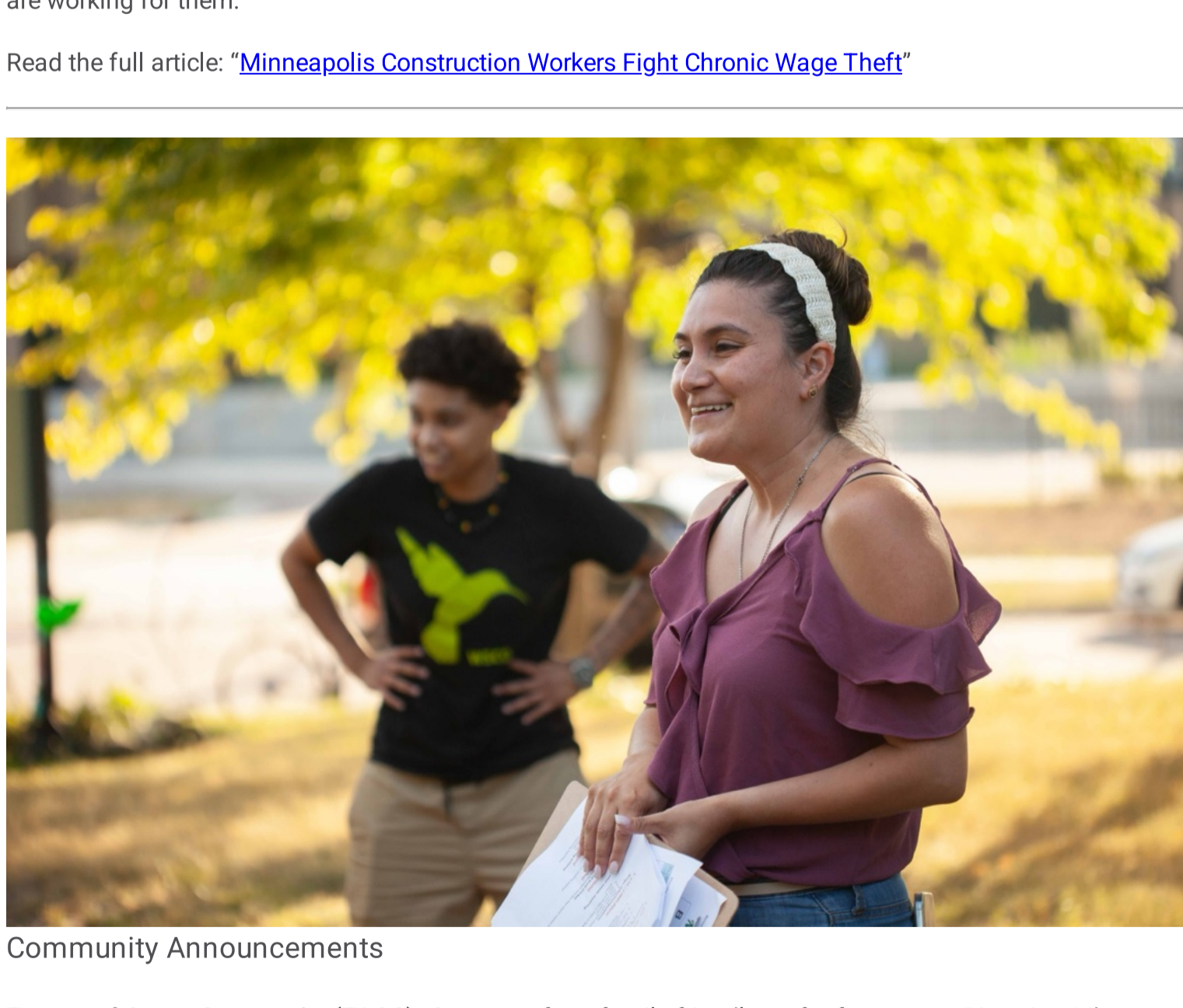


Solidarity with construction workers

As we organize for equitable development and housing justice on the West Side, we know we must stand in solidarity with the workers who build our homes. Development can't be truly equitable without fair wages and safe working conditions!

"I am a daughter of a construction worker and independent contractor! I grew up in a home where sometimes we had what we needed, but many times we did not,' Monica Bravo said through a megaphone. [...] That was five decades ago, and we have families today still facing wage theft while the construction industry is booming with millionaires and multimillionaires—all at the expense of exploiting the families that are working for them."

Read the full article: ["Minneapolis Construction Workers Fight Chronic Wage Theft"](#)



Community Announcements

Trans and Queer Community (TAQC): Come out for a family-friendly craft afternoon at Riverview Library this Sunday from 2:00pm- 4:00pm. [RSVP here.](#)

Free food gardens: Every Thursday at 6:00pm, stop by the top of the Smith Ave. bridge to join neighbors in gardening free food for all! You can harvest anytime from the garden. We'll be sharing free produce from the garden at Parque Castillo every Sunday from 3:00pm- 5:00pm.

Get your hands dirty! *Chip in* to help mulch the Garden of Good Hearts (at Wabasha and Congress) on Wednesday, August 31st, 5:30pm - 7:00pm. Bring shovels, rakes, or wheelbarrows if you have them. We'll also be planting some medicinal herbs and plants.

Run for WSCO's board of directors! We'll be electing new members to our board at this year's Annual Meeting. Keep an eye out for an announcement on our [blog](#) when we open up applications!

Lost & Found: a walking performance for reckoning with our grief: Four storytellers, four guides, four directions for reflecting on all we've lost and found in the reckoning of our collective grief. Join Wonderlust Productions this summer on Raspberry Island for a cathartic live theatre experience that connects with our communal sense of loss and resilience. An intimate, walking performance for a small audience. [Learn more.](#)

Have a community announcement to share? Email genevieve@wSCO.org!

Pictured: WSCO staff Mayra Avila (right) and RaRa Navarro (left) at a community gathering on the West Side.

#WestSideStrong

WSCO organizes people of West Side to build collective power to advance justice and racial equity in the community for all people. We envision a just, self-reliant West Side where all of our people are connected, safe, healthy and successful. We are West Side proud. We are West Side strong.

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Please note: WSCO staff are currently working via a hybrid model, both remotely and in-person. All in-person community events require participants to follow COVID safety precautions recommended by the CDC.