Jay Walljasper: 27 Bright Ideas We Should Steal from the Rest of the World

Success stories from Denver, Finland, and Suburban D.C. to make Minneapolis-St. Paul more prosperous, lively, and livable

Commissioned by The McKnight Foundation

Foreword

Jay Walljasper's *27 Bright Ideas We Should Steal from the Rest of the World* was commissioned by The McKnight Foundation as part of our "Food for Thought" series — a collection of independent essays to help inform our awareness of the fields in which we operate and our related program strategies.

As we strive constantly to improve our own practices, McKnight's staff and board place a great emphasis on learning from others. In that spirit, Jay's essay explores success stories from all over, including many with notable tie-ins to McKnight's program work in early education, regional development, the natural environment, and the arts. Clearly, not even the greatest ideas can work in every context. And in many cases, exciting replication is already under way in MSP — such as our own Generation Next education initiative, which traces roots back to Cincinnati's groundbreaking Strive network. But whether we're searching for new ideas to bring home or just on the lookout for insights to improve what we're already doing, I believe there is great power in inspiration.

Whether each translates precisely to our own regional context or not, Jay's assembled ideas seem truly to be making positive impacts in their own home regions. And the big issues they're taking on are nothing to sneeze at, from teacher empowerment to transit planning, affordable housing, interculturalism, and more. While a fun read, the essay also holds important lessons about "stealing" when we can, but also paying attention to the brightest idea of all — leveraging our own local resources, people, and creativity to build and maintain a stronger region.

Simply put, good ideas are worth sharing. I hope you find Jay's "27 bright ideas" engaging, with meaningful information and insights (and maybe even a little inspiration!) to serve as food for thought in your own work.

Neal Cuthbert, Vice President of Program
The McKnight Foundation

27 Bright Ideas We Should Steal from the Rest of the World

Success stories from Denver, Finland, and Suburban D.C. to make Minneapolis-St. Paul more prosperous, lively, and livable

Knowing Minnesotans to be both proud and practical, I am following up on my McKnight Food for Thought report ["Mary Tyler Moore Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Minneapolis-St. Paul's Serious Identity Crisis"](#) with some proven examples about how to close the achievement gap, increase social equity, expand cultural inclusivity, improve education, attract young people, boost quality of life, and better tell the story of our own success.

Let me underscore there is no recipe for urban prosperity and pizzazz that can be easily imported from Portland or Finland. The future of any metropolitan region is about capitalizing on local strengths, history, and culture more than cookie-cutter solutions cribbed from somewhere else. "Envying any place, or trying to copy it, is not the point…" wrote Ethan Seltzer, a professor of urban studies at Portland State University (and Minneapolis native), in a response to a MinnPost article about our envy of Portland. "What Portland did [40 years ago] was to take steps to be the best Portland it could be. Not the best Minneapolis, which would have been tempting at the time."

Fellow Portlander Randy Miller, a business leader and founder of the Greater Portland Inc. economic development partnership, told me that Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP) sports some impressive accomplishments. Instead of looking elsewhere, he counsels, "you should work to retain what you have."

Katherine Loflin — researcher for the influential Knight Foundation study that charted [economic performance](#) in 26 metropolitan regions including Minneapolis-St. Paul — cautions that the number one mistake communities make is "to just start doing stuff borrowed from other towns and neighborhoods. Remember you are the experts on this place. It's your history, your geography, your landmarks, your stories."

I generally agree with them, which is why I present the following ideas not as a detailed road map to a brighter future, but as a way to stimulate our own creativity to tackle problems and seize opportunities that lie ahead. In a world becoming ever more global in its outlook and operations, it's crucial to find inspiration and borrow ideas from everywhere.

How Cincinnati, Maryland, & Finland improve education for all

1   Implement student-based budgeting

2   Initiate peer review programs for teachers

3   Empower teachers to shape curriculum

4   Customize learning

The growing disparity in educational performance between minority and white students strikes at the heart of our self-image as the kind of place where any talented kid can get ahead. One in four elementary students in Minnesota today is African American, Latino, American Indian, or Asian American (and a much higher percentage in the MSP region), so it's time for all-out action to restore equal educational opportunity.

Cincinnati faced an overwhelming crisis in 2000, when barely half of all students in its public schools graduated from high school. A decade later, the overall graduation rate climbed to 83 percent with 80 percent of African Americans and 76 percent of low-income students earning diplomas. Test scores rose over the same period along with a jump in students attending college.

A report from the MSP-based group Growth & Justice credits student-based budgeting as a key factor in the Cincinnati turnaround. This means the school district allocates funds on the basis of students enrolled at a school after factoring in special needs of English language learners, students with disabilities, gifted students, and students from low-income neighborhoods. Some authority in decision-making was also decentralized to individual schools.

In 1999 **Montgomery County, Maryland**, a prosperous cluster of suburbs next door to Washington, D.C., set a goal that all students would finish high school qualified for college or a well-paying career. They focused close attention on African-American and Latino students with special training for teachers and cross-cultural discussion circles for students, parents, and teachers. Additionally, a Peer Assistance and Review Program, jointly run by teachers and principals, offered help to new and underperforming teachers.

Between 2003 and 2010 test scores for white and Asian-American 3rd graders rose 7 to 12 points while the performance of African-American and Latino students climbed 23 to 39 percent. The achievement gap also narrowed among 8th graders.

Educators and school reformers all over the world descend on **Finland** to discover the secrets of its educational system, which since 2001 has ranked number one (or close to it) for the performance of 15-year-olds on standardized tests in reading, math, and science.

The irony is that Finland doesn't place much emphasis on standardized tests. What they value most is teaching. Surveys show that Finnish men name teachers as the most desirable profession for a spouse, while Finnish women rank only doctors and veterinarians higher as potential mates, notes Pasi Sahlberg of the Finnish Education Ministry in his book *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Changes in Finland*. One key result of this respect is that teachers are given considerable freedom to shape curriculum in their classrooms, which Sahlberg believes translates into better-educated kids.

Another element of the Finnish success story is personalized learning: students work at their own pace based on abilities and interests. "Personalization is not about having students work independently at computer terminals," Sahlberg notes. Indeed, *Scholastic* magazine notes that visitors to Finnish schools are surprised to find relatively little technology in classrooms, even in a country with a strong high-tech economy. "The Finnish Way is to tailor the needs of each child with flexible arrangements and different learning paths," Sahlberg adds. "Technology is not a substitute but merely a tool to complement interaction with teachers and fellow students."

Sahlberg's conclusion: "Creative curricula, autonomous teachers, courageous leadership, and high performance go together."

How Denver & Houston Attract Creative Young People

5 Think big about transit

6 Make ambitious downtown plans

7 Foster mixed-use development

Denver envy is breaking out across the country. The Mile High City stands above everywhere else in attracting coveted professionals aged 25-34 — the future entrepreneurs, inventors, music stars, chefs, designers, activists, educators, artists, business leaders, and talented employees every region needs to thrive. Access to good jobs accounts for part of Denver's success, but Minneapolis-St. Paul ranks higher on job opportunities for young people, according to the Humphrey Institute's Ann Markusen. Nevertheless, we finished 39th in the same Brookings Institute study that Denver leads. Ouch!

How did Denver become so cool after years of being dismissed as "900,000 people waiting for the weekend" (meaning the city's only virtue was proximity to the Rocky Mountains)? It's a long story, according to Richard Fleming, who headed the Metro Denver Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations between 1980 and 1994.

A chief concern for Fleming at one time was stopping the flow of young talent out of Denver

during the 1980s. What stemmed the exodus was a visionary plan of action for downtown Denver (drafted by community activists working together with business leaders) that aggressively promoted transit, walkability, public spaces, historic preservation, high-density housing, and mixed-use development "All this established Denver as a someplace to stake out your future," Fleming explains.

What pushed Denver to the top for attracting young talent, according to Fleming, was another example of thinking big. In 2004, 65 percent of Denver area voters approved a sales tax increase to fund a $4.7 billion dollar plan to build 119 miles of light rail and commuter rail, 18 miles of bus rapid transit, thousands of new parking spaces at transit stations, and improved bus services throughout the region. Meanwhile, Stapleton Airport and Elitch Gardens amusement park were redeveloped as large-scale new urbanist neighborhoods where housing, workplaces, stores, and entertainment coexist in a cosmopolitan milieu.

The Millennial generation, which shows a distinct preference for urbane lifestyles and plentiful transportation options, is moving to Denver in droves. Even the #2 metropolitan region on the Brookings Institute list — **Houston**, which is generally not heralded for its livability — is building two new light rail lines and extending another line, all scheduled to open in 2015. They've also created two splashy new parks downtown as part of a push to enliven the city.

How Austin, Texas Grabs the World's Attention

8 Blow our own horn

9 Celebrate what's distinctive here

Minneapolis-St. Paul will continue to be defined in most people's minds by subzero temperatures until we do a better job of talking up our qualities. We might learn a few pointers on strategic self-promotion by looking a thousand miles south on 1-35. **Austin** has done a masterful job leveraging international attention for its homegrown music scene and reputation for non-conformity (hence the ubiquitous slogan "Keep Austin Weird").

The city could be best known for its scorching summer heat and unchecked suburban sprawl, but instead it's famous as the home of Willie Nelson, the University of Texas, the *Austin City Limits* public television show, the influential South by Southwest festival, and a stretch of clubs on 6th Street billed as the "live music capital of the world." Local boosters have even transformed a bat-infested bridge downtown into a tourist attraction, complete with t-shirts and coffee mugs. Austin parlays these assets to market itself as the fun, creative, youthful, liberal-minded epicenter of the South. Bright college grads and start-up businesses have flocked there, especially in the high-tech field.

What we can learn from Austin is to truly appreciate and nurture what's distinctive about this place — everything from bikes to booyah stew, Scandinavians to Somalis, pond hockey to the only waterfall on the Mississippi, our location on the 45th parallel (exactly halfway between the Equator and the North Pole) to the fact the "Twin" Cities are far from identical (think of Boston next door to Seattle). And if any of these ideas sounds weird, all the better.

How Portland, Suburban DC, Suburban Denver, & Vancouver reinvent urban living

10 Rediscover low-rise density

11 Legalize economical housing

12 Build better high-rises

13 Reinvent malls for the 21st Century

Battle lines are shaping up across the MSP region. On one side stand developers and neighbors who believe that convenient transit, walkable communities, big city amenities, environmental protection, and continuing economic growth depend on welcoming more people-per-acre to our communities. On the other side stand developers and neighbors who plead that everything we cherish about our communities is about to vanish in the wake of hulking mega-projects.

But there's a middle ground in this conflict — which turns out to be quite a nice place to live. Think of Georgetown in **Washington, D.C.**, Park Slope in **Brooklyn**, the Victorian Fan District in **Richmond**, the brand new Pearl District in **Portland**, and all of historic **Savannah**. These are low- to mid-rise neighborhoods with high levels of density but a charming and convivial feel. Indeed the places many of us go on vacation are bustling with people — cosmopolitan cities, historic small towns, theme parks, and the Minnesota State Fair. It's the proliferation of cars we fear, not the density of fellow human beings.

Density has become a dirty word in these parts because we associate it with ugly gigantically scaled projects that seem to spawn social blight. But Edward McMahon, senior fellow at Urban Land Institute, believes "we can achieve tremendous density without high-rises" by utilizing traditional designs such as two-to-four story walk ups that were once common in towns throughout America." Look at the suburb of **Berwyn, Illinois**, full of single-family brick bungalows, two-flat duplexes, and four-flat buildings, but with a population density greater than neighboring Chicago.

Unfortunately the best methods of achieving low-rise, neighborhood-scale density is illegal under many current zoning codes — attic, basement, or carriage house apartments; granny flats

or garden cottages at the back of a lot; unrelated adults sharing a house; small homes on small lots; houses without attached garages; shops around the corner.

Making such practices legal again would not only be good for urban vitality, historical character, and the environment but also promote social justice, says Alan Durning, author of Unlocking Home: Three Keys to Affordable Housing. "We have effectively banned what used to be the bottom end of the housing market," he writes.

A visit to **Vancouver** may convince you there's even a place for high-rises in the livable communities of tomorrow. The West End neighborhood near Stanley Park sports a population density approaching Manhattan but still retains a neighborly feel thanks to strong pedestrian amenities and a policy of locating garage doors and drop-off points at the back of high-rises, rather than the front — which is what destroys the curb appeal of so many high-rises here. Close attention is also paid to tapering tall structures so they don't block neighbors' sunlight.

MSP suburbs might enjoy richer rewards than the central cities by embracing density. Towns in **suburban Washington, D.C.**, are thriving by creating a walkable, lively downtowns around transit stops, which Christopher Leinberger, an expert on real estate forecasting at George Washington University, calls "a model for the country," based on what the Millennial generation is looking for in a home.

Declining malls also another opportunity for building attractive urban-feeling neighborhoods from scratch, like the former Villa Italia mall in suburban **Lakewood, Colorado**, which was transformed into Belmar, a neighborhood covering 22 city blocks that sports 14 restaurants, 70 shops, movie theaters, a bowling alley, a museum of 20th Century lifestyles, condos, apartments, and townhomes. And in at least one case, we can learn a lot from a thriving shopping center. Country Club Plaza in **Kansas City**, built in 1922, was the country's first commercial development to accommodate the automobile. It remains a bustling pedestrian-oriented place featuring Spanish-themed architecture with parking discreetly concealed in ramps behind the stores.

How Philadelphia & Botkyrka, Sweden, take advantage of diversity

14 Collaborate across racial & social divides

15 Embrace interculturalism

In an ever more globalized economy, we depend on workers, entrepreneurs, culture, and ideas from across the planet for our continuing prosperity. A reputation for disregarding diversity hinders us in attracting and retaining young professionals and multinational businesses, as well

as tarnishes our image as an exciting, forward-looking place.

"How do we create a city that recognizes that cultural diversity is an asset," asks Lisa Tabor, who founded Culture Brokers to promote cultural inclusivity and is involved with the African-American Leadership Forum. "How do we become proactive about the need to evolve our community to take part in a global society?"

Tabor sees the answer in interculturalism, a new perspective on diversity that promotes "intercultural interaction and intercultural co-creation, in which no group is expected to give up any of their cultural assets." Interculturalism goes beyond multiculturalism in its focus on cross-cultural engagement and collaboration.

The movement emerged as a way to address heightened racial and cultural friction in European cities, which similar to MSP, are no longer overwhelmingly white. **Botkyrka**, Sweden's most diverse city, seeks to instill people with pride in their ethnic heritage as well as a Swedish identity. "The experience of living and acting in a multicultural environment will give all those residents in our municipal district, regardless of background, an advantage in an increasingly globalised world," states an intercultural strategy document approved by the city council.

Another example of interculturalism strengthening a community's social fabric comes from **Philadelphia**, where since 1985 Project Shine has helped integrate newcomers into the wider community. The project connects local students and volunteers with immigrants seeking help to find employment, understand the health care system, and become more engaged in their communities. While many social programs focus on youth and young families, Project Shine reaches out to older immigrants who often suffer isolation. The organization now works in nine states, including initiatives at Metro State University and Minneapolis Community & Technical College, which offer a promising model of linking us across cultural divides.

How New York, Seoul, Detroit, & Duluth create invigorating public places

16 Bring back the town square

17 Reclaim streets for people

18 Cover highways with parks

One of the greatest moments in MSP's history also revealed one of our glaring deficits. When the Twins won their first ever World Series in 1987, a massive crowd assembled outside the Metrodome in Minneapolis — all whooped up with nowhere to go. They milled around the streets looking in vain for a place to congregate. But downtown Minneapolis and too many

other neighborhoods in our region lack a central gathering spot where we can come together as neighbors, friends, citizens, and celebrators.

The last place in the world we would think of looking for inspiration on community connectedness is **Detroit**. But the city's downtown is home to one of the world's top town squares. Campus Martius — a charming 2.5-acre park created out of a former traffic island to celebrate the city's 300th birthday — hosts gardens, concerts, ice skating, a café, an alluring fountain, an historic war memorial, lawns, and lots of chairs for people to hang out. Some questioned why civic leaders raised $25 million for a beautiful square when the city faces so many heartbreaking problems. But Campus Martius has panned out as a great investment — more than $500 million has gone into developing on neighboring properties, helping spark a much-needed downtown revival. The software firm Compuware brought 4,000 employees in from the suburbs to a new headquarters right across the street.

But how do you create new public spaces in existing communities without knocking down someone's home or business. Look no farther than packed **New York City**, where a series of popular public plazas have been created by closing a lane of traffic here and there on Broadway and 20 other streets around town. Or take a cue from equally crowded **San Francisco**, where on-street parking spaces have been transformed into more than 35 "parklets" for neighbors to enjoy. San Francisco also tore down the Embarcadero Freeway in 1991 to reconnect the city to its waterfront, liberating public space and sparking a development boom. **Milwaukee, Portland**, and **Seoul, Korea**, also dismantled sections of highways to create thriving new neighborhoods or parkland.

Roads can be transformed into public spaces even when you can't reclaim the pavement. One of the most romantic spots in New York, the Brooklyn Heights Promenade with its famous view of the Manhattan skyline, sits on a deck atop the Brooklyn Queens Expressway. **Chicago** built its world-famous Millennium Park atop a rail yard. **Seattle, Dallas**, and **Duluth** have covered stretches of freeways with green "land bridges" to reconnect neighborhoods. **Oslo** buried a busy highway in a tunnel to open up the harborfront, which is now one of the city's beloved destinations. **Madrid** recently covered many sections of its ring road to develop parks, trails, and housing.

How Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, & Syracuse strengthen struggling neighborhoods

19 Tap the economic potential of "anchor" institutions

20 Launch worker cooperatives

Anchor institutions — hospitals, colleges, and cultural organizations that have an intrinsic stake

in making sure their neighborhoods thrive — are tools for revitalizing low-income communities. Regions Hospital, for instance, is not going to pack up its beds and move to Mexico.

The University of Pennsylvania in **West Philadelphia**, a consortium of hospitals in **central Boston**, Wayne State University and two major medical centers in **Midtown Detroit**, and Syracuse University in **Syracuse** have devised strategies to harness the economic impact of anchor institutions to create more good jobs for neighborhood residents, more opportunities for local businesses and entrepreneurs, and more resources for community improvement projects.

An initiative in **Cleveland** helps inner-city residents become owners of new businesses that serve a cluster of hospitals, universities, and cultural institutions on the struggling East Side of the city, including the Cleveland Clinic and Case Western Reserve University. The Cleveland Foundation teamed up with Ted Howard of the Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland to launch the Evergreen Cooperatives: 1) Evergreen Cooperative Laundry, a green employee-owned firm with a contract to clean linens and scrubs for local hospitals; 2) Green City Grower Cooperatives, an employee-owned 3.25-acre greenhouse that produces greens year-round for hospitals and the university; and 3) Evergreen Energy Solutions, where worker-owners install photovoltaic panels and make weatherization improvements for anchor institutions and local residents.

How New York, Edinburgh, Winnipeg, & Harbin, China, enjoy winter

21 Find cold-weather cheer at holiday markets

22 Brighten long nights with artistic light displays

23 Construct ice castles & ice skating trails

Many of us agree that winter is the biggest curse of living in MSP. But is that really true?

Minneapolis ranked 14th among 100 major U.S. cities in a happiness survey conducted by *Men's Health* magazine and St. Paul landed at #8 with a grin. The seven cities ahead of us are all wintery spots (including Fargo, Sioux Falls, and Madison), with the sole exception of Honolulu. Who ranked last? Balmy St. Petersburg, Florida — with Tampa, Miami, Las Vegas, Birmingham, and Memphis all in the bottom 10. In last year's Gallup Healthways Well-being Index of the happiest states, nine of the top 10 feature long stretches of real winter weather, including Minnesota at #3.

So let's be glad we're not stuck in the gloomy sun belt and discover ways to better appreciate winter. As the days of December shorten across **Germany, Austria**, and **France**, people look

forward to [Christmas markets](#) where they can find a festive atmosphere along with holiday decorations, gift selections, and warm food and drink. **New York City** imported this tradition with gala [holiday markets](#) in Union Square, Bryant Park, and Columbus Circle that light up the season.

Our winter celebrations should not end abruptly January 2. Keep the good cheer going like they do in **Edinburgh**, where artistic displays of lights brighten dark skies; **Ottawa** and **Winnipeg**, where ice skating trails are maintained so skaters don't always have to go round in circles; and **Harbin, China**, (located near the border with Siberia) where dozens of massive snow sculptures and ice castles arise during January's month long International [Ice and Snow Sculpture Festival](#).

How Indianapolis enjoys a shining reputation by highlighting its strengths

24   Stand out as America's best bike town

Indianapolis was once was the most overlooked big city in America, except for one day each May when the Indy 500 ran. That's why local leaders embarked on a campaign to transform the city into an [amateur sports capital](#), building on Indiana's reputation for enthusiastic high school basketball fans. Launched to boost economic development as well as solidify the city's identity, the project's first accomplishment was constructing a top-flight sports venue that attracted the NCAA Final Four and the Pan Am games, both of which strengthened Indianapolis' claim to the title.

Soon Olympic organizations like USA Track & Field, USA Gymnastics, and USA Diving relocated there, followed others including the National Federation of State High School Associations, the American College of Sports Medicine, the National Institute for Fitness and Sports and — biggest of all — the NCAA. Today everyone knows Indianapolis as a sports town.

One of our biggest publicity bonanzas was when *Bicycling* magazine ranked Minneapolis America's #1 Bike City, beating out Portland, Oregon. The truth is Portland won back the title two years later, but no one here (or anywhere else) seems to know that. Let's keep it that way by making sure we really deserve the honor — not just in Minneapolis, but also St. Paul and the suburbs.

Bicycling, like amateur sports, bestows us with some very positive associations. Bikes are seen as youthful, healthy, hip, fun, green, family-friendly, and economical. Even people who haven't pedaled over the past 30 years will notice economic and social benefits from living in a place admired as America's bike capital.

Indianapolis again can provide us with inspiration on how to do it. The just-opened [Indy](#)

Cultural Trail is an 8-mile bike-and-walk path cutting through the heart of the city that connects cultural attractions, business districts, shopping areas, parks, universities, and neighborhoods. Unlike most urban trails, the route was designed to pass the city's key destinations, rather than follow the path of least resistance by not affecting automobile traffic.

Much of the Cultural Trail physically separates walkers and bicyclists from speeding vehicles — the latest trend in two-wheel transportation called Green Lanes, which encourages more people to feel safe riding in the streets. The number of protected bike lanes across American rose from 62 in 2011 to 102 last year, and is expected to double again this year. **New York City, Chicago**, **San Francisco**, and **Austin** are the current U.S. leaders in building green lanes, and all have seen a marked increase in bike riders.

Of course the Cultural Trail costs more than typical bike lanes, and was built through a partnership of public and philanthropic funders. But investment in an ambitious project like this in MSP would pay off economically sooner than you think. We are already a leader in the bike industry as home to Quality Bike Parts (QPB), Park Tool, Dero bike racks, and Surly bikes, so establishing MSP as the top city for biking will bring other employers in this fast-growing field to town, just as amateur sports did in Indianapolis.

How Europe and Canada Support Work/Life Balance

25 Add another three-day weekend in August

26 Celebrate our cultural treasures in a winter holiday

27 Explore new arrangements in working hours

Folks in New York, Chicago, D.C. and Silicon Valley like to boast about how many hours they log at the office. Our comparative advantage in competing with other regions could be promoting the healthy work-life balance here to attract young people, young families, entrepreneurs and everyone. We can bill ourselves as America's "Work Hard/Play Hard capital," highlighting the opportunities for biking, skiing, or boating after work; seeing a dance performance, gallery opening, and blues band over the weekend; taking the family to a museum, food festival, or water park.

But to become noted as a place where people "work to live" rather than "live to work" will take more than a clever PR campaign. It means taking real steps to give folks a break. Most of **Canada**, which shares our euphoria about summertime fun, takes the first Monday of August off as a public holiday. Minnesota should do the same. Whatever inconvenience and lost productivity felt by businesses would be more than made up for by the national attention we'd earn as a fun, generous, great place to live.

A wintertime holiday worth adopting comes from **Slovenia**, where February 8 has been declared [Slovenian Culture Day](#). Numerous prizes for arts and scientific research are awarded amid a festive round of cultural activities. **Milwaukee, Toronto**, and **Denver** do something similar they call Doors Open Day, an opportunity to tour historical and architectural landmarks otherwise not open to the public. Some combination of these events would make a grand occasion to highlight the essential role of arts and culture in Minneapolis-St. Paul. And February 8 (or the first Saturday of that month) is a time of year when we could really use a celebration here in Minnesota.

Obviously, the most important element in gaining attention for our Work Hard/Play Hard ethic is a serious commitment by employers, workers, unions, civic organizations, and public officials to explore new possibilities for balancing careers with family and free time. This is commonplace throughout Europe and other industrialized countries but in the U.S. involves rethinking rigid expectations about working hours, vacation, flextime, family leave, and telecommuting. Minneapolis-St. Paul, which has the highest workforce participation of any metropolitan region in the U.S., makes an ideal candidate to pioneer a new approach to work/life. We have a head start with the tradition of "summer hours" in many workplaces, where flexible arrangements make it possible to take Friday afternoons off.

Our key to prosperity in a spot that many people consider too cold or too remote has always been to do things better than other metropolitan regions. Our thriving arts community and celebrated recreational opportunities are cherished outcomes of this strategy. But to stay competitive in the future, it may be essential that we provide people with more time to enjoy all that's good around here.

ABOUT FOOD FOR THOUGHT
This publication was commissioned by The McKnight Foundation as part of our "Food for Thought" series — a collection of third-party reports that inform our program strategies and are shared with the fields we support.

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ABOUT THE McKNIGHT FOUNDATION
The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. Through grantmaking, collaboration, and encouragement of strategic policy reform, we use our resources to attend, unite, and empower those we serve. Program interests include regional economic and community development, Minnesota's arts and artists, early literacy, youth development, Midwest climate and energy, Mississippi River water quality, neuroscience, interntional crop research, and community-building in Southeast Asia. Our primary geographic focus is the state of Minnesota, with significant support also directed to strategies throughout the U.S. and in Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.

Founded in 1953 and endowed by William and Maude McKnight, the Minnesota-based Foundation had assets of approximately $2 billion and granted about $85 million in 2012.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Jay Walljasper writes, speaks and consults about urban and community issues. He is author of the *Great Neighborhood Book* and *All That We Share: A Field Guide to the Commons*. For many years he was editor of *Utne Reader* and now edits OnTheCommons.org. His website is JayWalljasper.com.

PHOTO CREDITS
2012 first place ice sculpture: Das Wintermachenmachine - Dr. Suess' Winter Making Machine
Saint Paul Winter Carnival: www.winter-carnival.com