

Candidates for Highland District Council's 2023 Election

HDC's mission: To foster opportunities for the people that live, learn, work, and play in Highland Park; to engage and connect with neighbors, businesses and local government; and to help build a more vibrant, welcoming, and safe neighborhood.

Name	Running for which seat?	Grid Number
Bob Whitehead	At-Large Representative	12
Elizabeth Brenes	At-Large Representative	6
Frank Jossi	At-Large Representative	2
Lindsay Shimizu	At-Large Representative	7
Julie Griep	Grid Representative	1
Caryn Lindsay	Grid Representative	5
Tom Griep	Grid Representative	5
Matt Clark	Grid Representative	7
Kevin Vargas	Grid Representative	9
Oscar Corral	Grid Representative	11

Highland District Council's 2023 board member election is Wednesday, March 29 at 7 p.m. to Monday, April 3 at 10 p.m. Mail-in ballots will also be accepted and must be received by HDC by Wednesday, April 5 at 5 p.m. If you would like to receive a mail-in ballot, please call Kathy at 651-695-4005 or email info@highlanddistrictcouncil.org.

At-Large Candidates

Name	Grid Number
Bob Whitehead	12
Elizabeth Brenes	6
Frank Jossi	2
Lindsay Shimizu	7

At-Large Candidates' Bios

Bob Whitehead, Grid 12

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

I am a 36 year resident of Highland Park. I served as a board member representing grid 10 as well as treasurer for 5 years. I have been a long term member of the community serving over 6 years.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

We all know that Highland Park is a great place to live and I would like to continue to do my part by making our neighborhood a great place for all.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

By listening to people and business leaders in the community to find out the wants and needs in the community... I have seen the past and I am looking forward to making Highland Park a great place to live for the future.

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

I value all modes of transportation and understand how it works for all.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

I don't just live in Highland Park; I am engaged in it. I have history in the community and have been a true representative for all. We are talking about our friends and neighbors. Remember this is Highland Park.

Elizabeth Brenes, Grid 6

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

I'm 37 years old and been a Highland Park resident for five years. My love and passion for this community is what gets me to curious what it's like serve a community I love.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

Goal is to make sure Highland Park is the place where everyone can have opportunities and have possible access for transportation.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

To discuss about the parking spaces for the residents and visitors alike. Maybe increase security or neighborhood watch system?

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

Transportation safety is very important. The lights for pedestrian walking is a must. Lights could install on the bike lanes for nighttime because of the streets with houses.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

I would suggest virtual chat to anyone who unable to participate. Plus get interpreter or captions for someone like me.

Frank Jossi, Grid 2

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

I served on the Highland District Council for several years both as a grid and at-large representative. During my time I helped lead the council as vice president during the debates over the Highland Bridge/Ford Site and also chaired and vice chaired the Community Development Committee. I also serve as HDC secretary and in that same role on the Highland Business Association.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

The mission matches my mission in life – to support local people and institutions, to buy local, to improve our parks and neighborhoods through volunteering, to create a more robust, diverse and welcoming Highland Park.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

I would ask three questions. Does it improve the ability of more people of different income levels to live in Highland? Does it offer the appropriate design aesthetic that not only fits the neighborhood but is looks good? (And this can be traditional or modern architecture.) Does the impact isolate neighborhoods or communities, or gate it own residents?

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

Repaving streets to make them safer not just for cars and bikes but pedestrians too. Creating safer crosswalks and sidewalks. Developing a bike lane system in conjunction with the city's that gets riders to natural and commercial settings.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

Through using technology. Through providing transportation on a small scale, such as HDC members offer a ride to someone wanting to attend an event. Through offer Metro Transit passes (or pass) if the event is on a bus line.

Lindsay Shimizu, Grid 7

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

As a software consultant, I spend every day developing processes and coordinating projects to achieve mutual goals. I'm also able to step back and see things from a variety of perspectives, which helps solve problems before they occur. Highland Park has been my home for the past 5 years--you can often find me walking to our library and I want to play an active role in improving the community for my future family. I feel connected to the mission of improving opportunities for all our residents, no matter where in the neighborhood they might live. I also think I bring a unique perspective to the table as an outspoken ally for racial and social justice. I hope to lend my passion and skills to make a positive impact for all our community members.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

As a resident who plans to be here for a long time to come, I definitely understand the desire to maintain the great community we've built, and that traffic, parking, usability, and beauty all have an important impact on the neighborhood. At the same time, one truth about life is that things will change. That's why I think it's vital to partner with the city on projects like the new Highland Bridge development, which present an incredible opportunity to envision a more equitable, environmentally-friendly future.

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

Safety for everyone regardless of their mode of transport is my first concern. After that, maintaining roads, parking considerations, and increasing charging stations has to be balanced with investing in more eco-friendly options such as walking, biking, and public transport. When you have limited resources, building the future we want to see will only come with compromise.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

As the chair for our Community Engagement Council this past year, I helped develop specific recommendations to tackle some of the barriers to participation that I faced as a first-time participant in the Highland District Council. I also helped spearhead a new program to allow young people to more easily participate in the decisions facing our neighborhood. I'd like to continue that work to enable

more diverse voices to get involved, as well as continue to improve visibility and execution on the HDC's Equity Plan.

Grid Representatives

Name	Grid Number
Julie Griep	1
Caryn Lindsay	5
Tom Griep	5
Matt Clark	7
Kevin Vargas	9
Oscar Corral	11

Grid Candidates' Bios

Grid 1 Candidate: Julie Griep

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

I love meeting new people and helping others, qualities which make me a good attorney (I am a patent attorney by profession), and which will also make me a good HDC Grid 1 board member. I am good at listening to and learning from others, and I care about making sure people get what they need from their local, regional, state, and even federal representatives. My passion for strong representation, my ability to understand how various organizations and government entities coexist and work together, and my care for others are all core strengths that I can leverage to represent Grid 1 and the larger Highland Park Community.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

For me, the HDC mission is meaningful for a couple of reasons: first, because connecting with other people is something that I value, especially in today's ongoing global pandemic and increasing virtual interactions. Connecting people with other people, with businesses, and with local government is vital to making sure everyone's needs are met, and beyond that connecting with people is fun! Second, fostering opportunities for others is something that I am passionate about, and being able to do that for my neighbors would be very rewarding for me, as well.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

As an initial matter, I think that present and future desires of the community should generally be aligned, because I think no one wants to create harm for future generations. However, when there are competing interests, the specific topic or issue would of course greatly influence how I would balance those competing interests. Further, I would do my research and reach out to experts on whatever issue is at hand prior to providing my opinion regarding how best to move forward.

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

As an avid outdoors-person, I do prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety very highly, and I prioritize everyone's safety very highly in general. For example, I think that good signage and bright crosswalks are vital for a safe neighborhood such as ours, where we get many commuters passing through on their way to one of the downtowns, but we also have a lot of pedestrians enjoying what Highland Park has to offer (and good signage would be less expensive than, say, extensive road construction). I also prioritize road safety in the form of fixing potholes, and ensuring timely plowing of snow and debris - those of us who drive understand how dangerous some of these potholes can be!

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

I would reach out! Community members who face obstacles to participation need representatives who diminish or overcome those obstacles and foster participation from everybody, and representatives can do so by showing up in person and speaking with those community members, by figuring out how to use electronic or physical resources to engage those community members, and by figuring out how to empower other community members to help those who face obstacles. I am very passionate about making sure every single person can participate in the public process if they want to.

Grid 3 Candidate: None

There are no candidates for the Grid 3 Representative position on Highland Park's board of directors at this time.

If you are interested in representing your neighbors in Grid 3, please email info@highlanddistrictcouncil.org or call 651.695.4005. We will hold a Special Election to fill this open position once candidates come forward.

Grid 5 Candidate: Caryn Lindsay

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

I'm a former U.S. diplomat, higher education administrator, and now owner of an intercultural and DEI training and consulting business. While living in cities on the east coast and abroad, I have observed both positive strategies and negative impacts of organizing and developing cities. I grew up in Merriam Park, attended the University of St. Thomas, and happily returned to Highland Park two years ago, bringing fresh perspectives that I believe will contribute to our community discussions.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

The ideals expressed in the HDC's mission align with my core values of respecting each person and supporting each individual to reach their full potential. I have been fortunate to contribute to these goals throughout my life in both professional and volunteer capacities. I currently volunteer with Neighborhood House's preschool location at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church and am helping my church to

support an Afghan family. I am excited to continue to work toward these ideals as an HDC board member.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

The speed of change seems to increase each decade. We want to hold onto what we value in our community while also ensuring it adapts to new social, economic, and educational realities, values, and needs. Questions I would ask about new development include: In what ways will the proposal contribute to the community's values and priorities, both now and in the future? Can we identify the consequences (intentional and unintentional) of the development? What are the non-monetary costs associated with the development?

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

Past Highland Park planners have ensured that the infrastructure for walking, biking, and driving all exist in our community. My first priority would be to make sure that sidewalks, residential streets, and designated walking and bike paths are well maintained. For the sake of the environment and those unable to walk or bike, we must continue the transition to transportation options such as e-vehicles and public transportation.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

The most effective means to inform and include as many as possible in public processes is to meet people where they are: in schools, senior housing, ethnic festivals, etc. It requires extra effort, but is vital if all voices are to be heard in important decisions.

Tom Griep, Grid 5

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

I have experience in finance, legal and executive leadership in my career. I can leverage that experience to bring my listening talents and help produce useful community solutions for the issues presented. I would like to use my skills and time to give back to the community.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

I have lived in St. Paul my entire life with over 30 years in Highland. I care deeply about the community and keeping it vibrant now and in the future. To be successful and vibrant Highland needs a balanced and holistic diversity of activity. I want to see small independent businesses thrive, as well as larger businesses. Strong parks and outdoor activities along with local schools are a key foundation. Everyone needs to feel safe in our community.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

Change is inevitable. For example, I can foresee a future that would include an increase in multiple generations living under one roof. That could require possible changes to the housing codes which should be used to keep the community aligned. We have to balance the needs of all sides in any new development.

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

I enjoy walking through the neighborhood and the increased health benefits that go along with it. There will always be a need for personal transportation on the roads because of weather and individual physical limitations. I think there is a need for increased education about the rules of the shared road and the adherence to those rules. Rules enforcement and clear and durable signs for drivers, bikers and walkers is part of that solution.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

The COVID era created the need for excellent advances in technology for remote participation. Of course I would want to use that technology to the best extent so that the barrier to participation is minimized. I would also like to bring some of the HDC activities out to many locations within the community so as to create opportunities to participate.

Grid 7 Candidate: Matt Clark

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

I grew up here, played sports, graduated from Highland Park High School and the University of Minnesota with two degrees and now have a family of six going to school, playing sports and building their futures here. I want to help guide that future in a vibrant, safe, equal and thriving Highland community for everyone.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

HDC's mission is meaningful to me because our community welcomes and serves people of all ages. Families plant roots here, kids come to daycare here, young adults play sports here and work part time jobs, adults stay to work and go to school and eventually, adults retire here. All of these life stages have accompanying businesses and services that make our community vibrant.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

We should build on our history as a streetcar developed community with vibrant intersections and businesses, nestled with rental and single-family homes. These development uses don't have to be in

conflict with each other. In fact, future development can and must coexist in order to retain the vibrant interactions that occur at our key intersections between businesses, education, recreation, and places of worship.

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

We have to prioritize the pedestrian environment while balancing the needs of cyclists and drivers. If we cannot ensure safe pedestrian access, the lifeblood of the Highland Village and our other key intersections is endangered. However, we cannot block current modes of transit that prevent new and future residents and visitors from getting to our neighborhood.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

As representative for Grid 7, I will be available by phone, email, and in-person discussions to listen to the needs of our neighborhood and to advocate for the views and beliefs of my fellow neighbors. On the playground, at daycare, at school and around Highland, I will be a voice for neighbors that want to see a thriving Highland Park.

Grid 9 Candidate: Kevin Vargas

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

My name is Kevin Vargas and I'm running for re-election on the Highland District Council. I live with my husband on Cleveland Ave where we've lived for the last several years and expect to be for the next 30 years because we love everything about our neighborhood: from the beautiful Hidden Falls Park and Mississippi River to the amazing local businesses and restaurants. I hope to use the skills I've gained through my professional career and graduate education, combined with my experience as the current President of the Highland District Council to earn another 2 years with the board.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

To me, the sense of community in Highland Park and our work on the council to further the sense of community is most important. As the first-born child of immigrants, I know how important it is to feel welcomed and safe in a community, so I want to extend the same hospitality my parents received when they came to this country to Highland Park. Our neighborhood is so welcoming and I want to continue building our sense of community through partnerships with community members, local businesses, and our elected officials.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

On the council's development committee, I saw firsthand how complex and varied the community's needs are when it comes to new development. As our neighborhood grows, we must be ready to meet the needs of future neighbors who want to join our amazing community while ensuring current needs of

the existing community members are met, whether it's issues of public safety, transportation, or sense of community. With your support, I'm confident we can make progress in Highland Park while remaining true to the kind of neighborhood we have all grown to cherish.

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

We must ensure that we maintain smart street, bike lane, and sidewalk design/infrastructure to promote safety for cyclists and pedestrians in our community, especially children and neighbors with mobility issues. The future of our planet depends on not only biking and walking, but also transit, which starts with investing in smart transit routes that meet the current needs of the neighborhood and set up our community for sensible transit options in the future. We've seen many cuts to the transit lines in Highland Park and opportunities for better sidewalks and roads, so we must continue to fight for the needs of Highland Park residents by partnering with stakeholders like the City Council and Metro Transit.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

Ensuring accessible, easy participation is tricky but crucial to the work of the Highland District Council. Over the last few years, we've come a long way to ensure our meetings are more accessible than ever before with both in-person and online meeting options. We aren't perfect at the Highland District Council, and I will push ourselves to do even better this year, especially as it relates to getting more community members to attend our meetings and events.

Grid 11 Candidate: Oscar Corral

Tell us about yourself and how you can best leverage your strengths to represent your grid and the Highland Park Community.

Hi everyone, my name is Oscar Corral, I'm 29 years old, I have two Associates Degrees, an Arts one in Political Science and the other one in Science with emphasis in Mathematics. I also have a Bachelors in Political Science with a minor in Sociology. I speak two languages, I have two cats, I have a full-time job at a nonprofit that supports businesses in South Minneapolis and a part-time job at a restaurant here in the neighborhood. I love to eat and cook, play video games, watch anime, and be engaged in the politics to better support my peers. Thanks to my experiences, I am able to leverage my strengths to represent grid 11 as I understand the system, I have worked in political organizations and have being elected into significant positions in the past to represent people.

What makes the Highland District Council mission meaningful to you?

As I mentioned, I work for a nonprofit in South Minneapolis and our mission is very similar to HDC's mission so I take that to heart as I believe I have a responsibility to support the communities I identify with and work for. As someone who had the privileged to get an education, it is only fair to give back to my communities.

When considering new development, how would you balance the desires of the present community with those of future community members?

I have had the opportunity to be part of a cohort called REDi from ULI MN Chapter, which is a national organization that focuses on the fair, economic, and well being of individuals who are in this field to better support communities of color and others. Thanks to this, I have good knowledge on how to best balance new developments that can represent present and future community members. Understanding the needs of members and considering what they want to see in these new developments is the first step.

How would you prioritize transportation resources (such as space and funding) for people walking, biking, and driving?

At this time, I am not able to answer this question as I am not familiar with any funding, budgets, proposals, or developments that could impact the opportunity for people to walk, bike, or drive; nevertheless, I would be happy to support HDC with this matter at any time.

How would you consider the needs and desires of members of the community who face obstacles to participation in the public process?

I have been living in my apartment for almost three years and this is the first time I heard about this organization and opportunity. I believe that says a lot about the obstacles that my community members face in order to participate in this matter. As a person of color, I am not surprised that my grid has no representation as my neighborhood is a multi-cultural area with people who don't speak English much or understand the systems that were put place to, coincidentally, make it more difficult, not welcoming, and frustrating to take part of. It might be the landlords, it might be the city, or other organizations but the needs of my neighborhood are not being met and we are being forgotten.