



'Where the biggies leave off...'

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Meet your Neighbor, Shawn Smith

Craig Wilson and Michael Wilson interview Shawn Smith about chairing KIAA, the controversial Minneapolis 2040 plan and just finishing Grandma's Marathon in Duluth.

Where did you grow up? I'm originally from Rhode Island, and I graduated from Syracuse University in 1988.

What brought you to the Twin Cities? I first moved to the Twin Cities in 2001 and worked as a leader in Merchandising and Global Sourcing at Target. I left a few years ago to start a consulting agency, and my core work is business development with global manufacturers doing business with Target.

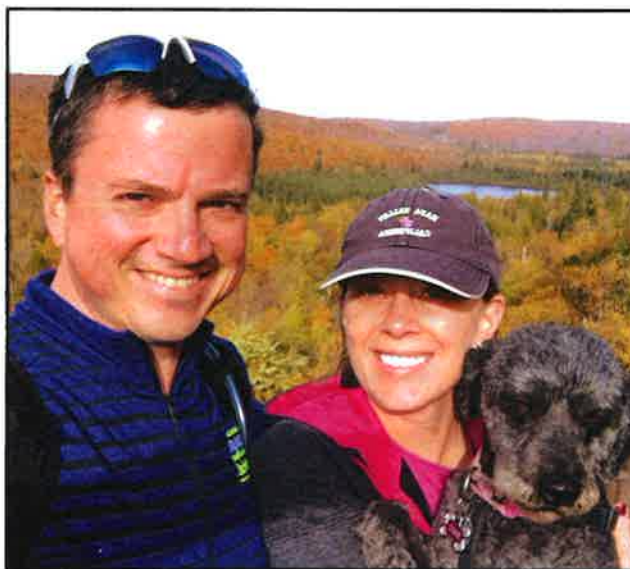
Why the Hill Lake area? I moved to Kenwood from St Louis Park in 2006 with my wife Lori, after we got married. We wanted to live near the Chain of Lakes and looked at various neighborhoods within walking distance. We picked Kenwood because we found the right house for us and liked the fact that it was tucked away in a quiet neighborhood between Cedar Lake and Lake of the Isles.

What are your hobbies and interests? My interests are travel, both US and Internationally, cooking, gardening, and camping up north.

What led you to get involved with the Kenwood Isles Area Association (KIAA)? I started to attend KIAA meetings a couple of years after moving into the neighborhood because I started to hear a lot about Southwest Light Rail. I was interested in hearing about issues affecting the neighborhood and helping out. A few years later, since I was already attending most of the monthly meetings, I decided to run for Secretary in 2012. I was elected chair in 2017 and just re-elected for this year.

How do you enjoy chairing KIAA? I really enjoy KIAA and the Chair role; the thing that is great about our board is that we are non-partisan. We get to do some really great things for the Kenwood without having to worry about party politics. Being Chair has enabled me to meet and work with some great people with one goal in common: making Kenwood the best it can be.

You did a sterling job as moderator of the four-neighborhood Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan information session on June 6. What did you do to prepare? How do you feel the session went? Thank you! I had a great team to help plan and orchestrate it. I think the meeting went well; we intentionally structured it one half written questions and one half open microphone. That way,



Shawn and Lori Smith and Baci.

we ensured we covered a diversity of topics, but also gave the attendees time to directly address questions to the Director of Long Range Planning. To prepare, I set aside any of my personal feelings about the plan. The meeting wasn't about my opinions; it was about providing our constituents a forum to get more information about Minneapolis 2040 so they could provide informed feedback. And I think it was mission accomplished. I hope they have submitted their comments to the city website.

How do you personally view the Comp Plan? Like any plan, there are positives and negatives to it. My concern is not necessarily about the content, if it is implemented thoughtfully. We are already seeing market forces bring multiplexes and development where that development is a wanted commodity, such as what you see in Uptown. And it's focused, not random. My concern is that the plan, if approved, will allow for random big development in established neighborhoods, without concern for homeowners. People buy a home based on their personal criteria. They enter homeownership knowing it is their single largest investment and hope that through building equity, they can cash that equity in someday. If the city changes the game via the plan and manipulates the housing stock in our neighborhoods, it is difficult to predict the effect on equity. The city planners, by their own admission, are not economists and did not engage any in the drafting of the plan, so they can't speak to the impact on property values. It's why many

property owners are nervous and frustrated.

You've been active with the Hill and Lake people working to get Southwest LRT done right. What are your thoughts on the project? What are its prospects? The neighborhood is really mixed on this and I want to respect opinions on both sides of the issue. That said, if I was in charge of regional planning and had to spend \$2B, it would not be on a single 14.5-mile light rail line. We could fix dozens of issues like school budgets, repairing infrastructure, and the homeless situation with that money and have enough left over to give tax relief. And in Kenwood, we are sacrificing so much. The Kenilworth Corridor is a significant natural resource and urban forest, which will be altered forever. It's one of the few places in the city where you can still get an "up north" experience.

You're a Republican in a heavily DFL part of town. Has that led to good conversations with your Hill and Lake neighbors? I was wondering if you'd ask me that. My life path has brought me to a place where I am a conservative. In KIAA, I was re-elected chair because people see that I care about Kenwood and I want to be engaged. Everything is so political now; I mostly keep my views to myself. Actually, I think I have a lot in common with many neighbors regardless of party: wanting a strong safe neighborhood, keeping property taxes in check and spent wisely, protecting our lakes, and having a city government that actually listens to all points of view, not just the ones they want to hear.

What would you like Kenwood to be ten years from now? I'd like it to be a place that keeps its spirit of everyone in the neighborhood caring about everyone in the neighborhood. What makes Kenwood work today is that neighbors know each other, and people live their lives in consideration of their impact on others. I hope it stays like that. And quiet. I hope it keeps its serenity and quiet.

You completed Grandma's Marathon on June 16? How did it go? Will you be doing the Twin Cities Marathon (TCM) this fall? I was a little slower than I wanted to be but still happy to finish in less than 4.5 hours. It was a great event and a fun after party. I will not be doing Twin Cities this fall; at 51 I only have one marathon in me each year. I've run Twin Cities four times, which is why I signed up to run my first Grandma's this year. But I'll stay involved with TCM by supporting them with my time and resources.