



## County focuses on major developments

A strong and diverse tax base is critically important to build and maintain healthy communities. To that end, along with the more familiar functions of county government -- maintaining roads, keeping property records, providing human services -- Anoka County supports efforts to better the area for all of its citizens by pursuing major economic development



**“The aim is to enhance private investment, create jobs, strengthen the tax base, and improve transportation.”**

*Board Chair Dan Erhart*

projects to enhance private investment in the community.

“The aim is to enhance private investment, create jobs, strengthen the tax base, and improve transportation,” said Anoka County Board Chair Dan Erhart. Among the projects the county is pursuing:

- Improvements at the Anoka County/Blaine Airport to improve corporate use;
- A harness racing track in Columbus Township, which is 100 percent private investment;
- The Northstar commuter rail line on



existing tracks from Big Lake to Minneapolis, which private developers believe will generate more than \$4.5 billion in private investment at station stops;

- The Preserve at Rice Creek, a 740-acre multi-faceted development in Blaine with a Vikings stadium as anchor. This development would be 70 percent private and 30 percent public investment.

It is clear why competition is keen for quality projects like these. A recent study by the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce

reports that in 2003 alone, the Xcel Energy Center’s overall impact added \$247 million into the Twin Cities economy. The project also generated 2,730 new jobs, and the economic impact added \$170 per year to average household income in St. Paul.

“It is no longer possible for communities to stand back and wait for economic development opportunities to



**“If we hope to continue to hold down homeowner property taxes to a reasonable rate, we have to work hard to attract a variety of businesses.”**

*Commissioner Margaret Langfeld*

come to them,” said Anoka County Commissioner Margaret Langfeld. “If we hope to continue to hold down homeowner property taxes to a reasonable rate, we have to work hard to attract a variety of businesses.”

### **Harness Track**

The North Metro Harness Track Initiative, a group of private investors, is working to bring harness track racing to Columbus Township in Anoka County. The group is proposing to build a privately funded \$25 million harness track facility with a grandstand capacity of 1,400 fans, a 200-seat restaurant, card room, simulcasting, and parking for up to 1,200 vehicles. Backers expect the project will create 300 new jobs and bring \$9 million annually to the local economy. The Minnesota Racing Commission is reviewing the proposal and will make the final decision whether to approve the project.

### **Anoka County/Blaine Airport**

The Anoka County/Blaine Airport serves mainly single and twin engine propeller, light personal, and corporate jet aircraft.

Anoka County is funding \$700,000 to receive matching grants to lengthen the airport’s east-west runway to 5,000 feet to accommodate installation of an Instrument Landing System (ILS). “These

*“Economic Development” continued on page 2*

## County’s bond rating strongly affirmed

Moody’s Investor Services, a national independent credit rating company, has reaffirmed Anoka County’s Aa3 bond rating. Only five other counties in Minnesota have a higher bond rating than Anoka County.

Moody’s attributes Anoka County’s favorable rating to its “strategic location in the Twin Cities metropolitan area, ...strong tax base growth, ...well-managed finances characterized by healthy reserves, and moderate levels of rapidly retired debt.”

The Moody’s report also predicts the county’s financial position will remain strong due to “prudent budgeting and ... conservatively managed financial operations of the county board.”

The positive bond rating means Anoka County continues to get very low interest rates on bonds to finance necessary capital improvement projects including:

- Replacing boilers and switching some boilers to alternative fuels resulting in substantial energy savings;
- Changing the financing method for an upgrade of the property tax records system to save \$75,000;
- Remodeling and equipping a food service

facility at Rum River Human Service Center to save \$220,000 annually by preparing meals on site;

- Financing \$700,000 to match federal grants for improvements to the Anoka County/Blaine Airport, with anticipated full repayment from the Metropolitan Airports Commission within two years.

“By taking advantage of the favorable interest rates currently available to us, Anoka County will realize a significant savings on the cost of these projects,” said Anoka County Commissioner Jim Kordiak.



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*Commissioner Jim Kordiak*

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## “Economic Development”

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improvements will allow for safer and quieter airplane landings,” said Commissioner Dave McCauley. The county expects full repayment from the Metropolitan Airports Commission within two years.



**“These improvements will allow for safer and quieter airplane landings.”**

*Commissioner Dave McCauley*



### Northstar commuter rail

The first phase of the Northstar commuter rail proposal is for service on a 40-mile segment along

Highways 10 and 47 between Big Lake and Minneapolis. Stations are proposed for Big Lake, Elk River, Anoka, Coon Rapids, Fridley and Minneapolis. The trains are expected to carry the equivalent of one-and-a-half lanes of traffic at peak periods.

Private investors anticipate the train will support an estimated \$4.5 billion in development along the corridor. As of press time, the state Legislature has not yet provided funding for commuter rail.

### “The Preserve at Rice Creek”

Anoka County/Blaine is proposing a \$1.5 billion, 740-acre development called The Preserve at Rice Creek that would include the 80-acre Vikings stadium site, team headquarters and training facilities, hotels, corporate offices, restaurants, retail shops, a regional medical facility, upscale townhomes, and 240 acres of preserved wetlands. The project would increase the



*“The Preserve at Rice Creek”*

tax base by an estimated \$10 million for the City of Blaine, \$10 million for Anoka County, and \$5 million each for the Spring Lake Park and Centennial School Districts, helping to shift the tax burden away from individual households.

As of press time, the state legislature has not yet passed a stadium plan.

“The population of Anoka County grew 52 percent since 1980,” Commissioner Dick Lang said. “In order to maintain the vitality and financial stability of this county, we must aggressively pursue diverse economic development opportunities.”



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*Commissioner Dick Lang*

## NEWS BRIEFS

- Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department has unveiled a new **open air large group picnic/performance pavilion** at the Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park. The new facility will be used for the popular “Thursday Nite LIVE! at the Dam” concert series as well as for group picnics and events. For pavilion rental information, call 763-757-3920.

- More than \$4.4 million in low interest home mortgage funds is now available to **first-time homebuyers** in

Anoka County through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA). The mortgage offered is a 30-year fixed rate loan at or below market-rate interest. Homebuyers also may be eligible for the MHFA's Homeownership Assistance Fund, which offers an interest-free second mortgage to assist with a down payment, closing costs, or monthly payments. Call Anoka County's Community Development Department at 763-323-5764 or visit [www.AnokaCounty.us/homes](http://www.AnokaCounty.us/homes) for more information.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a **new Web site for children** to help them better understand the contributions made by veterans. The Web site, at [www.va.gov/kids](http://www.va.gov/kids), includes facts about veterans, games and puzzles, as well as information about the Department of Veterans Affairs, volunteer and scholarship information, and links to other federal agencies.

- Construction has begun on Chauncey Barrett Gardens II, a **senior apartment building in Centerville**. Located at 7026 Centerville Road, the 31-unit market rate building is owned by the Anoka County Housing and Redevelopment



*The 451st Army Band performed at the grand opening of the new performance pavilion at the Coon Rapids Dam Regional Park.*

Authority and is being built in cooperation with the City of Centerville. For more information, call 763-377-1800.

- Anoka County parks had more than 2.5 million visitors** in 2003. Bunker Hills Regional Park was the most heavily used

county park with more than 600,000 visitors. The number of visitors to Anoka County parks has increased 115 percent since 1995.

- The Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department is teaming with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the University of

Minnesota Department of Fisheries and Wildlife on a **heron rookery research and preservation project**. The project is in response to the decline in the number of great blue herons on Peltier Island in southeastern Anoka County.

- Residents are encouraged to **test the safety of their private well water** on a regular basis. Residents may pick up a well water test kit from

the county's Environmental Services Unit, Room 360 of the Anoka County Government Center in Anoka. A \$27.50 laboratory fee will be charged. Call 763-422-7063 for more information.



- Anoka County's Chomonix Golf Course in Lino Lakes is the only county-owned course listed as among the **top 10 metro area courses** in the Twin Cities Business Journal. To make reservations at Chomonix, call 651-482-8484.

- Residents may obtain passports** at the Anoka County License Centers in Anoka, Blaine, Coon Rapids, Columbia Heights, and Ham Lake. License Center staff also can assist with **fishing licenses, motor vehicle registration, tabs, title transfer, and birth and death certificates**. All License Center offices are open weekdays 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. For a complete list of available services, visit the county's Web site at [www.AnokaCounty.us](http://www.AnokaCounty.us) and click on “Licenses & Permits.”

- The Anoka County Libraries now offer **Newsstand Complete**, an online resource containing more than 250 current full text national and international newspapers including the New York Times, USA Today, the Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, The Times (London), Bangkok Post, and the Minneapolis Star Tribune.

- Anoka County is interested in your ideas for a new long-range plan for the county park system. To express your views, fill-out a survey available at many parks facilities, at all county libraries, or downloadable at [www.anokacountyparks.com](http://www.anokacountyparks.com).



*Anoka County Commissioner Rhonda Sivarajah speaks at the groundbreaking ceremony for Chauncey Barrett Gardens II: “With this expansion, we are giving our seniors the opportunity to find quality, affordable senior housing in their own community, close to friends and family, doctors, churches, and shopping.” With Sivarajah is Violet Barrett, widow of Chauncey Barrett.*

# Methamphetamine a growing threat to public safety

by Anoka County Attorney Robert Johnson and Anoka County Sheriff Bruce Andersohn

The illegal manufacture and use of methamphetamine (or meth) is a serious threat to public safety in Anoka County.

While the exact number of meth users in the county is unknown, the number of felony complaints the county attorney's office issued for the possession, sale, or manufacture of meth has soared from 100 cases a year in 2001, to 300 in 2002, to 325 in 2003. Meth-related crimes now account for the most frequently charged cases in the county attorney's office. Due to the aggressive work of the Anoka-Hennepin Narcotics and Violent Crimes Task Force, Anoka County led the state with 42 methamphetamine labs uncovered and investigated in 2002.

Methamphetamine -- known on the street as speed, crank, glass, crystal, and ice -- is an extremely addictive, powerful amphetamine that stimulates the central nervous system. Meth users experience euphoria, enhanced wakefulness, increased physical activity, and decreased appetite. It gives users a sense of

well-being and high energy, a release of social inhibitions, feelings of cleverness, competence and power. The rush -- or high -- may last as long as 12 hours.

Short-term physical effects of meth use



Anoka County Attorney Robert Johnson and Anoka County Sheriff Bruce Andersohn

may include dilated pupils; diarrhea or constipation, nausea, and vomiting; elevated temperature, heart, respiratory rate, and blood pressure; extreme weight loss; insomnia; skin rashes, sores, and infections; tooth grinding; uncontrollable writhing; jerky, flailing movements; convulsions; chest pain, arrhythmia, and brain hemorrhage; organ failure; and stroke.

The long-term physical effects of meth use are devastating and include tooth and bone loss; malnutrition; immuno-suppression; damage to liver, kidneys, and lungs; cardiovas-

cular problems; long-term or permanent neurological damage; depression and headaches; psychiatric problems; and changes in personality and behavior.

Producing methamphetamines is relatively easy because many of the necessary ingredients are readily available household chemicals including antifreeze, white gas, ether, starting fluids, Freon, lye, drain openers, paint thinner, or acetone. The main ingredient, over-the-counter cold and allergy medicines containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, are converted to high quality methamphetamine using chemical processes. There are more than 300 substances that can be used to make methamphetamine, depending on the production method used. The process produces five to seven pounds of chemical waste for each pound of methamphetamine manufactured.

Meth can be manufactured anywhere. The Anoka County Sheriff's Office has found meth labs in apartments, motel rooms, vacant buildings in rural areas, vehicles, campsites, and private homes. The cooking process itself and the waste that results from the manufacture of meth pose significant public health and safety risks. Methamphetamine recipes rely on the use of volatile organic compounds, explosives, acids, bases, metals, solvents, and salts. These ingredients have the potential for explosions,

*"Meth" continued on page 4*

# Treatment, surveillance used to supervise sex offenders

by Corey Kohan, Anoka County Corrections

Anoka County uses a variety of strategies to supervise sex offenders living in the community. Sex offenders under correctional supervision are subject to strict court-ordered conditions and behavioral controls monitored by specially trained probation officers. Probation officers work closely with community agencies and law enforcement to effectively manage these offenders. The result is improved public safety.

Anoka County Corrections currently supervises approximately 300 adult and 50 juvenile sex offenders. The majority of these offenders are under probation supervision. A smaller percentage has been released from prison on supervised release, which is similar to parole.

With probation, sex offenders typically serve up to one year in the county jail followed by 10 to 40 years of community supervision, depending on their offense. Offenders are often required to complete specialized treatment and must have no contact with victims or potential victims. Most are subject to the state's sex offender registration law that requires sexual offenders to register their address, employment, and vehicles with authorities.

Offenders on supervised release from prison generally have completed two-thirds of their original sentence in prison and will be monitored for either five or 10 years in the community, depending on their criminal record. Each sex offender is evaluated by the state prior to release from prison and is classified as a Level 1, 2 or 3 offender based on their risk of re-offending. Community notification meetings are held for Level 3 offenders, considered the highest risk to re-offend.

Prior to legislative changes in 2000, Anoka County Corrections had just one probation officer responsible for supervising more than

100 adult sex offenders, with many more offenders dispersed throughout the department on general caseloads. Thanks to "Katie's Law," named in memory of Katie Poirer, who was murdered by a convicted sex offender, counties began receiving grants to improve sex offender supervision. The law also expanded the scope of the sex offender registration statute and increased penalties for some offenses.

Directed by the Anoka County board to look for innovative, efficient, and cost effective methods of delivering services, the county's Corrections Department investigated model sex offender supervision programs across the country, eventually adopting a "containment approach" for sex offender management. This approach emphasizes behavioral controls and collaboration between the criminal justice system, social services, and mental health professionals.

With the grant money, Anoka County added three full-time and one part-time probation staff to supervise adult sex offenders. Sex offenders supervised in Anoka County are now placed in a specialized unit subject to rules restricting contact with potential victims, certain living situations, and other high-risk behaviors. Polygraph testing is used regularly in both treatment and supervision to obtain a full offense history from offenders and to monitor compliance with supervision.

The highest risk sex offenders released from prison are placed on Intensive Supervised Release (ISR), a one-year program that begins with curfews, house arrest, and up to four face-to-face contacts per week with a probation officer. As an offender makes a positive adjustment in the community, the level of supervision is gradually reduced. Offenders successfully completing the ISR Program, are transferred to the Sex Offender Unit for continued supervision.

All offenders are subject to random home and employment visits. Surveillance also has been an invaluable tool in discovering offenders engaging in high-risk behaviors. In one case, surveillance officers tracked an offender to a health club where he was observed meeting with a juvenile male in a hot tub. He was arrested and eventually sent to prison. Computer inspection software also enables probation officers to search an offender's computer hard drive. In three instances, offenders were found in possession of child pornography and were charged with, and later convicted of, new felony crimes.

Unfortunately, the state budget situation makes it more difficult to maintain this high level of supervision. A reduction in state grant funding has resulted in the elimination of funds used for regular polygraph examinations of offenders. Money is no longer available to assist certain indigent offenders in starting sex offender treatment immediately. Surveillance hours have been reduced.

Despite the cuts, Anoka County is continuing to provide effective and proactive supervision of sex offenders. It is important to note that recidivism of sex offenders is lower than public perception. The majority of sex offenders supervised in Anoka County are complying with supervision, attending treatment, and making positive life changes. Those whose behavior poses a risk to public safety are being held accountable.

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# New look for Anoka County's Web site

Anoka County's Web site has a new look designed to make it easier to find information and access services at [www.AnokaCounty.us](http://www.AnokaCounty.us).

The new home page features pop-up menus specially tailored for the interests of residents, businesses, visitors, and public officials. The Web site includes easy-to-navigate sections on county



departments, news items, information on detours and other highway construction projects, recycling, elections, parks programs, and more.



**"An increasing number of residents use the Internet on a regular basis so we are working to provide more opportunities to conduct county business online."**

**Commissioner Dennis Berg**

"An increasing number of residents use the Internet on a regular basis so we are working to provide more opportunities to conduct county business online," said Anoka County Commissioner Dennis Berg. "With this redesign of the home page, it is easier to quickly find the information they need."

The county's Web site receives an average of 2,500 visits per day. The most frequently visited pages are in the property information section where residents can:

- Pay property taxes
- Look up property information
- Download the homestead application
- Calculate estimated property taxes

"Providing this information online is an efficient way of supporting developers, realtors, title companies and home buyers -- all

the people who are part of the rapid growth that is occurring in this county," Berg said.

Job seekers can go to the Web site to view a listing of available jobs, sign up to be notified about job openings, and download applications.

Other county business available online includes:

- Links to Bunker Beach, Chomonix Golf Course, and other Web sites;

• Directions to county parks, hours of operation, and listing of programs;

- Recycling and yard waste information;
- License Center locations, hours, and services;
- A comprehensive list of available services for seniors;
- Library hours and programs;
- A public comment page about roads, signs, and traffic conditions;
- Updates on road closures, detours, and construction;

"The content of the county's Web site will continue to evolve as we're able to offer more services online," Berg said. "The Web is a highly effective, communications tool -- convenient to use and a money-saver as well."

## "Meth" continued from page 3

chemical fires, and the release of toxic gases. The sludge byproducts and liquid wastes contaminate structures, soil, and groundwater. Discarded lab equipment and chemical waste are often dumped wherever convenient. Meth labs are so toxic that law enforcement personnel wear protective clothing when seizing evidence, and the Environmental Protection Agency assists in the cleanup as a toxic waste site.

Meth use has a significant financial impact on nearly all aspects of county government -- law enforcement, corrections, county attorney, courts, public health, and human services. On average, Anoka County has one newborn baby per week testing positive for meth exposure. Meth babies, who often have tremors, are irritable, and have difficulty eating, are immediately placed in foster care. Anoka County moves swiftly to terminate parental rights in cases where a mother is unable to

remain clean of meth in order to protect the child from further exposure to dangerous chemicals and the neglect that accompanies parents' use of meth.

Meth use also impacts the criminal justice system. Because of their impaired judgement, meth users are more likely to commit crimes or be the victim of a crime.

Citizens can help stop the manufacture of methamphetamine in their neighborhoods by being watchful for the common habits of dealers and manufacturers:

- Frequent visitors or activity, particularly late at night;
- Windows blackened, or draperies and shades always closed;
- Individuals who frequently pay bills with cash;
- Chemical odors coming from the residence, garage, or other outbuildings;
- Receptacles containing chemical products in unusual quantities.

Citizens who observe suspicious activity

should immediately contact the Anoka County Sheriff's Office or their local police department. Methamphetamine labs are dangerous crime scenes that pose a substantial short and long-term health risk. Anyone discovering the remnants of methamphetamine production should be careful not to touch any of the waste products. The waste from meth production is so strong it can burn the soles off shoes and cause serious health problems. It can be absorbed through the skin by even brief contact. Meth residue has been found on discarded coffee filters, plastic bottles, Mason jars, and propane tanks.

Further information about meth is available from the Partnership for a Drug-Free America at [www.drugfreeamerica.org](http://www.drugfreeamerica.org), the National Institute on Drug Abuse at [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov), and the Minnesota Department of Health [www.health.state.mn.us](http://www.health.state.mn.us). To receive a free copy of "A Neighborhood Resource Guide on Methamphetamine Labs," call the Anoka County Sheriff's Office at 763-767-4664.

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