



## Inclusivity at the coffeehouse

### Minnetonka coffee shop taps state program to hire new workers

Ellie Swanson is not a coffee drinker, but her new job at Dunn Bros. Coffee in Minnetonka is giving the former Transition Plus student a chance to work a job she loves.

"My favorite part is I can make eggs and also I love to do the cash register," said Swanson, who started in July. "I remember all different kinds of drinks."



Swanson is one of several new employees from the disabled community working at three of Michael Kollar's west metro coffee shops thanks to funding assistance from the state of Minnesota.

Kollar, a Minnetonka resident, purchased the Minnetonka Dunn Bros. in July 2023 and since acquired three additional locations (Hopkins, Excelsior and Savage). In May 2024, he attended a Minnetonka Business Council series event hosted by the city and Greater Wayzata Area Chamber of Commerce where he learned about the state's Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund (ERAF).

The ERAF helps small to mid-sized employers request reimbursement for expenses related to providing reasonable accommodations for job applicants and employees with disabilities.

Kollar was interested in hiring employees with disabilities to expand upon the long-standing partnership between his Hopkins' location and Hopkins Public Schools' Transition Plus program. To do so, he needed equipment that would automate the coffee-making process.

"[The ERAF] is designed to support businesses in overcoming real or perceived financial barriers related to providing reasonable accommodations for employees or applicants with disabilities," said state ERAF coordinator Ray McCoy. The special espresso machines Kollar



purchased "would allow his employees with disabilities to perform their duties effectively and comfortably."

Kollar applied online and within a month received a state payment to help purchase three espresso machines - one each for his west metro locations. Having the machines at multiple locations was important to Kollar because it allows him to hire more employees with disabilities and move them between locations for a broader experience. "Each coffee shop as a different vibe to it."

Kollar credits the chance encounter with McCoy at the business council as opening a new door to expand employment opportunities for an underserved population.

"I want to let people know that even though you have a disability or not you can still work like other people," Swanson said. "It doesn't matter what kind of person you are. It takes time to learn things but you will get it."



Interested in learning more about how the City of Minnetonka can help your business grow?

Contact us at [bizsupport@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:bizsupport@minnetonkamn.gov).

# Meet Minnetonka's ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The City of Minnetonka is pleased to welcome Kjerstin Yager as an economic development coordinator. Learn more about Kjerstin and how the economic development staff can assist local businesses.

## Q: Welcome to Minnetonka! Tell us a bit about yourself.

My work has taken me to Argentina, Germany and Spain, but like many Minnesotans, I always come back to my roots. I was drawn to return because I am passionate about supporting our local community.

I have a master's in public policy from the University of Minnesota and am fluent in Spanish. My career has been rooted in public engagement, listening to the community's needs and shaping my work to serve them best. Most recently, I worked at Metro Transit, where I assisted business owners, developers, city staff and elected officials to plan for the METRO Blue Line Light Rail Extension.



## Q: What are you most looking forward to in this position?

I am excited to support Minnetonka businesses professionally, as I already do so personally. My role is to help local businesses, whether that be with financial assistance programs, workforce development, site selection or via connections to contacts and programs at the county, state or federal level.

## Q: What is your goal for Minnetonka's economic development?

Minnetonka has a strong business portfolio, and I want to help it continue to grow. My goal is to adapt to businesses' needs, effectively use business owners' time and encourage and highlight all that businesses accomplish here.

Welcome, Kjerstin! We're glad to have you here.

## The team

Our economic development team supports local business in many ways. Reach out to learn more:

### Julie Wischnack, FAICP

*Community Development Director*

[jwischnack@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:jwischnack@minnetonkamn.gov)

952-939-8282

Julie manages the community development department, including inspections, environmental health, licensing, housing, planning and zoning.

### Alisha Gray, EDFP

*Economic Development and Housing Manager*

[agray@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:agray@minnetonkamn.gov)

952-939-8285

Alisha oversees the city's housing programs, grants, business assistance and transit projects.

### Kjerstin Yager

*Economic Development Coordinator*

[kyager@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:kyager@minnetonkamn.gov)

952-939-8234

Kjerstin serves as a first point of contact for business owners, including those considering opening a business in Minnetonka.

### Kendyl Larson

*Housing Coordinator*

[klarson@minnetonkamn.gov](mailto:klarson@minnetonkamn.gov)

952-939-8267

Kendyl supports local employees' housing needs, including those relocating here, experiencing a layoff or have other housing concerns.

## Grants available for business waste reduction

### Business recycling containers

Small businesses and non-profits are eligible for up to \$3,000 worth of containers and compostable bags to start or improve recycling and organics recycling. No match required.

### Business waste prevention

Grants are available to fund waste prevention projects. Applicants may apply for up to \$50,000 (minimum of \$2,500 per project; projects require a 25-percent match).

Learn more about these grants at [hennepin.us/businessrecycling](https://hennepin.us/businessrecycling). Applications are accepted through Nov. 11, 2024 or until funds are depleted.

HENNEPIN COUNTY  
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# Avoid phishing scams

Phishing is a serious risk for businesses, especially for smaller organizations with fewer resources to dedicate to cybersecurity. Yet, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk.

The Minnetonka Police Department shares these tips from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA):



## 1. TRAIN EMPLOYEES HOW TO SPOT PHISHING

Employees should be trained to look for basic signs of phishing emails:

- Strange or unexpected requests
- Alarming language
- Urging immediate action

Check the email address for validity and think about whether the request seems legitimate.

## 2. ALERT EMPLOYEES TO THE RISKS


Ask your IT provider, or designate an employee as a security manager, to keep tabs on current events related to cybersecurity. Ask that person to brief you on the latest scams so you can keep your staff up to date between trainings.

Continually remind employees, customers and vendors to watch out for communications that may seem legitimate but aren't. If they are not expecting communication or receive something that seems off, they should check with supervisors through known channels.

## 3. DEVELOP A CULTURE OF CYBER RESPONSIBILITY

Don't just count on once-a-year training to be enough. As a leader, enforcing online safety practices starts with you. Commit to making your business safer by regularly reinforcing "cyber hygiene" like you would other workplace policies.



 October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month – a great opportunity to evaluate your business' cybersafety. CISA offers a variety of anti-phishing training materials and other resources at [cisa.gov](https://www.cisa.gov).

# Business survey shapes city strategy

In spring 2021, Minnetonka conducted a citywide business climate survey. The goal of the survey was to gain a better understanding of the state of the local economy and identify any program, assistance and outreach changes that may be necessary to connect with businesses.

The responses to the survey have helped shape the city's economic development strategy over the last few years. Thanks to business feedback, the city added two new loan programs for businesses, and staff increased outreach efforts with the local business chambers.

In early 2025, Minnetonka will conduct a second business survey, conducted by the Morris Leatherman Co., the same company that conducts the city's annual resident survey.



The City of Minnetonka partnered with the Greater Wayzata Chamber of Commerce in 2024 to host a Minnetonka Business Council series to better support local businesses. The city also partners with MPLS Regional Chamber for a bimonthly Business Connections series.

 Watch for more information about this phone survey.

**Fall 2024**

A business publication from the City of Minnetonka to help businesses start, grow and thrive.

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# SMART SALTING

Winter presents a particular challenge for keeping parking lots and sidewalks safe for customers, clients and staff.

But using too much road salt can create problems. Over time, salt cracks sidewalks and parking lots; corrodes buildings and vehicles; damages soils and roadside plants; and contaminates water bodies.

The city promotes Smart Salting certification for businesses, property managers and others who manage snow and ice. This training covers:

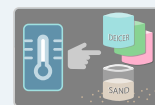
- Best practices
- Tools and technology
- Alternative deicers
- Safe disposal of road salt and other deicers.

If you use a contractor for snow and ice management, ask whether they implement smart-salting strategies to save money, time and the environment.



**1. Shovel**

Clear walkways before snow turns to ice. Apply salt only if needed.



**2. Select**

Salt doesn't melt ice below 15°F. Use sand for traction when it's too cold, or a different de-icer.



**3. Scatter**

Use salt only where critical. Aim for three inches of space between salt granules.



**4. Sweep**

Clean up leftover salt, sand, and de-icer to save and reuse as needed.

Learn more and find a calendar of upcoming trainings at the [pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/smart-salting-training](https://pca.state.mn.us/business-with-us/smart-salting-training).