

NINA MOINI: The rich culture and history of Minneapolis will be on full display for anyone to see this weekend with Doors Open. 75 spaces across the city, many normally closed to the public, will open their doors for free, behind-the-scenes looks. From historic buildings to city maintenance facilities, the festival reveals the corners of the city that most of the year are unseen. Joining me now is Heidi Swank, the Executive Director of Rethos, which puts on the celebration. Thanks for being with us, Heidi.

HEIDI SWANK: Thanks for having me.

NINA MOINI: Wow, I am so excited about this. I did not about this, this entire program. I understand it's in its fifth year. Is it continuing to grow? Are more people hearing about it?

HEIDI SWANK: It is continuing to grow. And we're actually starting to learn that people want to learn more things about their city. And so we have expanded it beyond. Doors Open is May 9 and 10. But we also have events, part of smaller events, all throughout the week leading up to Doors Open.

NINA MOINI: Why is it important, do you think, for people to go out and check out some of these places that maybe they wouldn't even think to go? I mean, a maintenance facility.

HEIDI SWANK: It's really interesting because one thing I about all of us Minnesotans is that we love to learn how things work.

NINA MOINI: Totally.

HEIDI SWANK: So things like the maintenance facility is really important. We've been doing some tours of Cordia Energy, the district energy plant under Minneapolis, and those types of things. I think people love to learn how things work because it helps them feel more connected to their city.

So I think about being able to go to the Pantages Theater, which is one of our new venues this year, and learning more about that-- this was built, opened in 1916-- and how that ties to us as people and ties us to our community. So I think it really helps people get a sense of who they are and what we are as a city.

NINA MOINI: Absolutely. And there is something about driving around the city and knowing what's going on in your surroundings. What neighborhood am I in, or what buildings are around? What's the history here? Like you said, it does help for everybody to be more connected. What are some of the more unexpected venues that you would encourage people to check out?

HEIDI SWANK: Sure. So I would say one of them that you should check out is one of our family-friendly venues is the City of Lakes Waldorf School. They're going to be having circus demonstrations from 10:00 to 12:00 and 2:00 to 4:00 each day, Saturday and Sunday. So if you are interested, if you got a kiddo who's maybe interested in the circus or in gymnastics, that might be a good place to take them.

I think also one of the weirder venues we have this year is another one of our new venues. It's the Met Council Odor Control Facility-- and getting back to that idea that Minnesotans like to how things work. So those are a couple that I would say really to check out.

NINA MOINI: OK. And I know you mentioned the City Stories, but what's the benefit in making this more than a weekend-long event?

HEIDI SWANK: Right. So I think we know that one of the things we've been hearing as we've been producing Doors Open Minneapolis is that we've honestly been hearing from across the river in St. Paul that they've got a lot of great things to tell stories about to. And so we had thought, well, maybe there was a way to include stories for all of the Twin Cities.

So this allows us to continue to tell the really great stories of Minneapolis, but also include St/ Paul. And we're working to include the suburbs too in coming years into City Stories. But I think we all know the Twin Cities is an excellent place to live. And so we need to be able to-- be great to learn more of the stories across the entire Twin Cities.

NINA MOINI: And so Rethos too is a nonprofit that works on just a historic preservation. And how do you think this helps in that mission? Does it help people to appreciate more of what's around them?

HEIDI SWANK: Yeah, I think, for us, where we are the voice of the built environment in many ways, often people won't really know what happens to a building. And all of a sudden, they go around the corner, and it's gone. But if you know those buildings, if you're connected to those buildings, it helps us to be able to activate people who maybe want to say, yeah, we don't want that building gone. We want to go talk to our elected officials because they know that building.

They know the importance of it. They know that story. And so it is, for us, a lot about keeping buildings out of landfills. And through this program, Doors Open and City Stories, it really helps people connect and become invested in those buildings. So when they are endangered, they may come out and help us in our efforts to keep them around.

NINA MOINI: And I understand there are-- some of these venues, you would normally have to purchase a ticket to go to. So it's also a way to experience things maybe as a family or things that you would have to pay quite a bit more to do. But I do wonder your advice, in just the couple of minutes we have left, for people who are planning their visits to some of these places.

I checked out your website. And one of the things I liked is that there were tabs for ADA-accessible buildings and just family buildings you mentioned or more family-friendly ones to visit. How do you suggest people plan for this?

HEIDI SWANK: So one of the things to think about is that there's often-- a lot of these are spread out across the city of Minneapolis. But keep in mind that there is free public transit the entire weekend. So if you go to our web page under the Plan Your Visit tab, you can download your public transit pass.

If you are driving, there are also many of the ramps in downtown Minneapolis are free for parking, especially city ramps. So again, that's on our Plan Your Weekend on the website. So take a look at those before you head out.

I would also suggest that when you look online at the program guide and pick out that one venue that you really wanted to see, then look on the map and see what's around that. Because I think you might want to go to the Italian Cultural Center, but, oh, what is around that thing? And then you can go see some things that maybe you hadn't even planned on seeing. So try to use one venue as a launching pad to see everything around it.

NINA MOINI: Great. That's nice that your website is so helpful for people to be able to go and plan. Heidi, thank you so much for coming on *Minnesota Now* and telling us about Doors Open.

HEIDI SWANK: Thank you so much. We really appreciate it.

NINA MOINI: That was Heidi Swank with Doors Open.