

CWEA

GRIFFIN

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Pihl brings sports, city planning and community experience into her work as new alderwoman

Tina “Sweet T” Pihl has a remarkable resume for her newest job: 17th Ward Alderwoman.

Born in Canada, she was a high school All-American soccer player, a four-year starter and MVP of her college varsity soccer team. And in 2004 she qualified for the U.S. Olympic Team Trials in women’s freestyle wrestling.

Pihl is a graduate of Yale University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). A self-described “social entrepreneur” and

urban planner, she has worked for over 20 years in housing, community and economic development from Connecticut to rural Kentucky to Costa Rica to Honduras then to Colorado, before moving to St. Louis in 2012, when she was hired by the St. Louis Economic Development Partnership to work in underinvested communities in North County — Spanish Lake, Castle Point and Glasgow Village.

This year, in her first run for elected office, Pihl defeated her

opponent to become alderwoman for the 17th Ward, a seat held for 33 years by Joe Roddy and a ward that has become a center for redevelopment and growth. The ward includes the Cortex tech district, City Foundry, Grove and the region’s largest employer, BJC HealthCare.

Pihl’s journey started in Canada as an interracial adoptee — both of her parents are white. During preschool, her family moved to Guilford, Connecticut, when her father got an engineering job. Guilford was a soccer town and Pihl, a natural athlete, embraced the sport. She played with and against some of the Olympic Women’s Soccer stars, like Kristine Lilly and Mia Hamm.

Pihl said being active in sports as a youth helped to shape her life and career.

“There were a lot of life lessons,” she said. “Perseverance, mental attitude and showing up for yourself and others. On a team, you realize how the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”

It is through her strong work ethic that she learned through her parents, athletic achievements and



17th Ward Alderwoman Tina Pihl

her Ivy League education that Pihl developed the cornerstones of her career, emphasizing what she calls her “three pillars”: accountability, community and equity (ACE). These are the principles she’s used to guide herself, her career and now her position as an alderwoman. “If you use these principles, you’ll make the right decisions,” she said.

Pihl’s varied career as an urban planner, social entrepreneur,

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New 17th Ward Alderwoman Tina Pihl (right) poses for a selfie with Mayor Tishaura Jones.

Experience the magic of the holidays in the CWE

As the holiday season approaches, it’s time to start thinking about fun traditions to boost the holiday spirit. Whether that’s enjoying a seasonal cocktail at a favorite bar or

whiling away the afternoon listening to Christmas carols, or spending time with loved ones, the Central West End is THE place to be this holiday season.



On Dec. 4, 11 and 18, the Central West End will be transformed into a winter wonderland for its 12th annual Window Walk festivities. Window Walk brings back the time-honored tradition of going downtown to see festive windows, while showcasing the CWE’s retail and dining establishments. Visitors can stroll amid elegantly decorated windows, while shopping at boutiques and enjoying seasonal libations and meals at local restaurants.

“Window Walk in the CWE is one of our best neighborhood traditions and something people from throughout St. Louis look forward to every year,” said Kate Haber, executive director of the CWE Business Community Improvement

District. “Our businesses’ beautifully decorated windows will be shining bright all month long to spread holiday cheer all throughout the neighborhood.”

The Central West End Business CID partners with local designers to bring these holiday window displays to life. Transforming each business window into a magical display is no easy feat, and this endeavor would not be possible without the expert guidance from local designer Krista Howard, owner of KH Interiors. For the past three years, she has served as the Window Walk lead designer, guiding teams throughout the entire design process. Businesses and

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housing advocate and executive director of two community building organizations has had her be involved in fascinating and transformative work.

In Honduras, her and team of graduate students from the departments of architecture, civil engineering and city planning, designed a three story walk-up apartment complex for low and moderate income families in the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa, after Hurricane Mitch devastated the country.

Later, in Denver, she worked on the nation's largest urban in-fill redevelopment project at the former Stapleton Denver Airport, now home to more than 30,000 residents. There she piloted a national urban design initiative called "Active Living by Design" - which promotes active living, healthy eating and walkability and new urbanism. BUt not doing NaNo

In Boulder County, she created "Mobility4All" a program that provides free metro passes to participants of the federally funded Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

In 2013, she was part of a win-

ning computer hackathon team, which designed a prototype system that automates how the homeless in St. Louis could reserve beds in shelters. "I love to create programs from the ground up, bringing a vision to fruition. It is my drive to create something from nothing," Pihl said.

In St. Louis, as alderwoman, one of Pihl's main jobs is to review development projects and to try to ensure they are done equitably. For this, she brings her east-coast experience and perspective. In Boston, a law passed in 1986 that requires developers to pay "linkage fees" to support affordable housing and workforce development in economically challenged parts of the city. St. Louis does not have such an ordinance, but it does have a long history of granting tax breaks to developers in desirable parts of the city. Pihl and Mayor Jones are starting to adopt the Boston model.

In July, Pihl and the Jones administration negotiated with City Foundry Developer, Steve Smith, a \$1.8 million "equitable development fee" to put into the city's Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Pihl said "this is a win-win for the city and the developer."

This also fits into Pihl's desire to create development that doesn't displace people and allows for affordable housing. Pihl has been a co-chair of the Anti-Displacement Working Group of the STL Vacancy Collaborative for the past three years. She said, "Anti-displacement in revitalizing neighborhoods keeps a community culturally and economically diverse, and in the long run strengthens the fabric of the City as a whole."

Pihl is a former president of the Forest Park Southeast Neighborhood Association, and has lived in the neighborhood for seven years. "I love living here, it's welcoming and has a great neighborhood feel. I'd like to keep it that way." But with her busy schedule, is there still time to play soccer? "Wrestling is my sport now," Pihl laughed. "It's a great workout."

— Jeff Fister



Visitors sample offerings at City Foundry.

FOUNDRY *from page 6*

thing new here, or you're going to see something new you might not have noticed," Soete said. Even if you've already taken a peek at the new St. Louis attraction, there is guaranteed to be something new to taste, discover or learn at City Foundry STL.

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