



38th Street DREAMS

George Floyd's killing amplifies mission to lift up Black lives on the corridor

▲ Anthony Taylor at the site of Dreamland on 38th, a project to build a gathering space for African Americans to launch and expand small businesses. Photo by Isaiah Rustad

By Michelle Bruch

Before a police officer killed George Floyd, 38th Street was already known for Black history. The corridor was home to a barrier-breaking Black business hub starting in the 1930s, Prince's junior high school and the state's oldest operating African American newspaper. The city of Minneapolis was poised to designate 38th Street from Nicollet to Bloomington as a cultural district this year, working with residents to draft a 10-year vision for community-owned development that uplifts the cultural identity and keeps it intact for years to come. Floyd died at 38th & Chicago, the center of the district.

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Parks still a refuge for unsheltered people

Public health, safety concerns at Powderhorn encampment

By Andrew Hazzard

In a small group of tents on the south end of Martin Luther King Jr. Park in Kingfield, a group of unsheltered people has started to feel comfortable.

Sisters Nikki and Lola Stand have been staying in the park for just over a month. The neighbors have been kind and supportive, they say, and outreach workers from St. Stephens are trying to get them into an apartment. Living in the park, they said, is much better than sleeping by the highway or being inside the large encampment at Powderhorn Park to the east.

"We feel safer here than we do anywhere else," said Nikki Stand.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) voted to designate parkland as a refuge for unsheltered people in June, a move that granted permission for tent encampments citywide. On July 1, a divided board of commissioners voted to remove an item from their agenda that would have placed limits on the number and size of encampments at city parks and ended the designation of parks as "refuges" starting in September.

That vote was sparked by the emergence of Minnesota's largest-ever homeless encampment at Powderhorn Park, which began after people were removed from a former Sheraton hotel that had served as a temporary refuge during the unrest.

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Floyd's death a tipping point for Calhoun names

Institutions in Southwest move away from old lake name

By Andrew Hazzard

The name George Floyd will be memorialized in Minneapolis, but his death may serve as a tipping point for removing a name once omnipresent in the city.

Major institutions in Southwest Minneapolis have announced their intention to rebrand themselves to remove the name "Calhoun" since Floyd was killed. Shopping centers, gyms and apartment buildings have announced plans to distance themselves from the legacy of John C. Calhoun, a 19th century vice president who was a proponent of slavery and a leading designer of some of the nation's most damaging policies toward Native Americans, and played a role in crafting the Indian Removal Act.

"It's something we've been hoping would happen for a long time," said Carly Bad Heart Bull, executive director of the Native Ways Foundation.

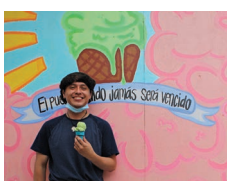
When Floyd was killed, the monuments started to topple and names began to change nationwide. Now, Calhoun Square, the Calhoun Beach Club and the Calhoun Towers apartments have all announced intentions to change their names, and other organizations are examining changes more seriously than before.

Bad Heart Bull was involved in the process of restoring the Dakota name Bde Maka Ska

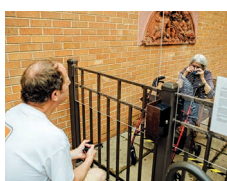
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Calhoun Square's new ownership group, Northpond Partners, removed the large sign adorning the building on June 20. A new name for the shopping mall has yet to be announced. Photo by Isaiah Rustad



Ice cream shop opens in Uptown
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Outdoor reunion
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“The reasons to continue with this work have only been amplified,” said Council Vice President Andrea Jenkins. “We need to now think about a permanent memorial to commemorate this moment, to acknowledge and recognize the site of a global movement focused on racial equality.”

The permanent memorial is still under discussion. Meanwhile, Black-owned businesses are pursuing other big ideas that will shape the street.

Construction may start next spring on Dreamland on 38th, a project to build a cafe and Black business incubator at 3800 3rd Ave. S. It’s inspired by the namesake Dreamland Cafe that served celebrities like Lena Horne and Frankie Lyman as a rare social center for African Americans when it opened at 38th & 4th in the late ’30s. The project is a partnership between the nonprofit Cultural Wellness Center (CWC), which co-owns the Midtown Global Market, and property owner Dr. Freeman Waynewood, CEO of KingField Family Dental at 38th & Nicollet.

Waynewood grew up attending segregated Texas schools and remembers only a handful of businesses owned by people of color, including a hotel, a service station and an insurance agency. Waynewood invested in the early ’80s to help purchase the state’s first Black-owned railroad, the Minnesota Valley Transportation Co. in southern Minnesota.

“That was the beginning, but I’ve always supported Black entrepreneurs in whatever way possible,” he said. “Support, I think, that’s the key thing. Encouragement.”

Waynewood said there are budding ideas to redevelop his Kingfield dental office as well.

“We’re at the western end of 38th Street, and with the George Floyd issue, with the potential for a memorial of some sort, I can envision this corridor as being a unifying as well as an identifying point in the city for people of color,” he said.

Dreamland and CWC Associate Anthony Taylor will lead “Slow Roll” bike rides down 38th this summer to historical sites, which now include the site where Floyd was killed.

“Communities west of 35W, they can’t imagine that someone would do that, because their lived experience is inconsistent with that. This filming of it, unceasing, unflinching, watching a man die in plain sight, stretched what people imagined and therefore believe,” Taylor said. “People really are deeply impacted because it absolutely did not allow you to look away. You know that corner.”

Living in a protest site

A few doors south of Floyd’s memorial, Gloria Burnett said she wants 38th & Chicago to remain closed, as it is now. She pointed out a street sign where someone had pasted over Chicago Avenue to rename the street George Floyd Avenue.

The intersection is finding a daily rhythm, said Rashad West, owner of the Dragon Wok restaurant that relocated in March from Kingfield to 38th & Chicago. In the morning, visitors come for reflection. Later in the afternoon, people start grilling and singing and dancing.

It’s been a difficult time for the business. West released May 25 surveillance video showing Floyd not resisting arrest, and the restaurant announced that it stands in solidarity with the neighborhood and the Black community.

“It’s bigger than us,” West said.

And in the midst of COVID-19, West worries about his friends at other restaurants

adjusting to a business model based on takeout and delivery. Dragon Wok is still delivering to the same customers in Southwest, even walking curbside pickup orders a few blocks away upon request. Businesses that make it to the other side of the pandemic will benefit from all the innovation, he said.

“We’ve just got to keep putting up a fight,” he said.

“38th Street is different, but it’s quieting down substantially from the last two to three weeks back,” said Tracey Williams-Dillard, publisher of the Minnesota Spokesman-Recorder, the historic Black-owned newspaper with offices at 38th & 4th. She said it felt like the newspaper was initially reporting in a war zone, hearing low-flying helicopters and seeing the National Guard stationed behind the building.

“I grew up in that building, my grandfather started the paper in 1934. And at the age of 8, I was going in there doing whatever I could do. To pull up in front of a building that had never been boarded in my lifetime ... just hit me really hard,” she said.

In November, the city renamed a portion of 4th Avenue South “Launa Q. Newman Way” after Williams-Dillard’s grandmother. When Launa Newman’s husband, Cecil, died, there weren’t many female publishers, and a competitor moved into the building, expecting to take over. But Newman continued running the paper, standing in front of a grid sheet manually pasting up articles until a family member introduced computers to the office. She ran the paper for 30 years before turning it over to Williams-Dillard in 2007.

The newspaper hosted a virtual town hall meeting July 2 titled “Call to Action: We Are Not Okay (And That’s Okay).”

“The Black community is dealing with two different pandemics. We’re dealing with the COVID pandemic and we’re dealing with the George Floyd pandemic, and it’s just a double whammy on our community,” Williams-Dillard said.

As advertisers pull back dollars during the pandemic, the paper is taking donations and selling subscriptions. Knowing that African Americans are disproportionately dying of COVID-19, the paper is heavily focused on health education.

“It’s been a struggle at times. But then at the same time it’s been a joy, because I’m seeing the difference the paper makes in the stories we do in the community,” she said.

“History is unfolding right in front of our eyes, and we have to make sure that we document that history,” said Tina Burnside, curator of the Minnesota African American Heritage Museum.

Long-term plans for the museum include relocating to a site on 38th Avenue, perhaps at Sabathani Community Center.

The museum is currently slated to reopen Aug. 4 at Plymouth & Penn on the North Side with new exhibits featuring protest photos by John Steitz, preserved plywood art and video performances by LaTanya Cannady, Joe Davis, Nico Moore and Drea Reynolds. Sixteen artists will paint a Black Lives Matter mural on the Plymouth Avenue roadway July 18.

Another new exhibit details the 1920 lynching of three African American men accused of a crime without physical evidence in Duluth. A mob of people dragged Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson and Isaac McGhie out of their jail cells and lynched them from a light pole. Burnside said it’s important to understand the context for Floyd’s death.

“Everyone has this view of Minnesota as being a progressive state, and lynching only happened in the South. But no, it happened

interest rates, Hassan said. This can make it difficult to even foster a conversation about available loan or grant options, she said.

“No one wants another loan, and no one wants another burden,” she said. “And today, many people are not sure whether [their business is] going to make it or not. We’re still in the middle of COVID-19.”

Zoe Thiel, who heads the city’s Small Business Team, said for businesses damaged by



Volunteers tend the flowers at George Floyd’s memorial at 38th & Chicago. Left to right: Jemette Owens, Regina Marie Williams, Toby Hettler and Jeanelle Austin. Photo by Michelle Bruch

here in our own state,” Burnside said. “And now 100 years later, we have the killing of George Floyd, uncovering the veil from police brutality and systemic racism and racial violence against Black people.”

Burnside is among those calling for a change in ownership at Cup Foods, suggesting raising money to buy the building and open an affordable grocery store at 38th & Chicago.

Other new ideas are coming from the Bryant Neighborhood Organization, which voted to establish a George Floyd Empowerment Center, envisioned as an anti-racist training institute, a memorial and a free community event space.

In a recent online call, more than 160 community members joined Council Vice President Jenkins to talk about ideas for a permanent memorial at 38th & Chicago, which include a garden or a sculpture. One idea is a roundabout, although some advocated for closing the intersection, disliking the idea of driving over the space.

Jenkins noted that Chicago Avenue carries the most-used bus route in the state.

“We have lived for the past 40 years with a major street in our city that was closed down — Nicollet Avenue. It really disrupts the entirety of the whole city,” she said. “If we disrupt that route, we disrupt a lot of Black and Brown people’s livelihoods.”

Jenkins expects to quickly rename the 38th & Chicago intersection in honor of Floyd, although the details are still being finalized. She also hopes to rename Columbus Avenue in the future.

On the call, Jeanelle Austin asked for the community’s blessing to start composting dried flowers at 38th & Chicago for reuse in community gardens. She started tending the memorial shortly after Floyd died, straightening the flowers and sweeping the streets. Her guiding principle is: “Everything is somebody’s offering. Throw nothing away.” Even the dirt is reused, said volunteer Regina Marie Williams.

Living three blocks away, Austin arrives each day around 6 a.m. while the intersection is still hushed. She returns home in time for meetings at her startup, the Racial Agency Initiative. Austin is a racial justice coach, helping churches, corporations and individuals answer the question: “What can I do?”

She advises everyone to address racism wherever they are, whether it be at work, at the dinner table or in the mirror. If everyone does their part, change could come fast, she said.

the civil unrest, much of the current available programs and aid is within the private sector. The Lake Street Council has raised about \$7.5 million to help businesses and nonprofits build and reopen, and community organizations like the African Development Center in Cedar-Riverside have been a huge asset to the city, she said.

Community partners have been helping business owners report small business loss,

She recommends reading history written by Black authors and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have A Dream” speech in its entirety.

“Everyone loves to say these things take time,” she said. “It only takes time because people don’t want to change. When people want something, people will make it happen.”

Beginning the work

“I think this moment of solidarity that we see is important. And now we begin the work,” Taylor said.

The proposed boundaries of the 38th Street cultural district are Nicollet Avenue to the west, 36th Street to the north, Bloomington Avenue to the east and 40th Street to the south.

The draft plan, dubbed 38th Street Thrive, calls for celebrations of arts and culture, a minority small business relief program for shops at risk of closure, a Black Heritage Land Trust to help African Americans own homes and commercial space, a capital fund to leverage low-interest construction loans, and a solar cooperative on Sabathani’s roof.

To keep housing affordable in the area, one suggestion would give tax relief to longtime homeowners who see property assessments increase by 15%. Landlords would be encouraged to participate in a city program that offers property tax reduction in exchange for affordable units.

Another idea would launch the Clarissa Walker Homebuyers Club, named for the woman who spent 39 years as a constant presence at the community center. The Saturday morning breakfast club could cover topics like credit repair, house maintenance 101 and down payment assistance. An upcoming CWC project would map the area’s historical African American land ownership and look at how wealth did or did not transfer forward over time.

Given the current crises, community meetings on 38th Street Thrive are delayed. At the moment, Jenkins is focused on safety. She was devastated by the news that a pregnant woman had died of a gunshot wound inflicted at 37th & Elliott, while her baby was placed in intensive care.

“We have to get some control over the safety in our communities,” Jenkins said. “Safety at the intersection of 38th & Chicago is of utmost concern now.”

But she still envisions a stand-alone Center for Racial Healing, to give Black people space to heal from everyday trauma.

“Hope is what keeps me going,” Jenkins said.

FROM EAST AFRICAN BUSINESSES / PAGE A8

didn’t even stand a chance. And many, when you talk to them about record keeping, they had a shoebox in their house. ... They can’t afford to hire accountants to be on their payroll.”

Some East African business owners emigrated to the United States with a mistrust of the government and others don’t want to take out a loan for fear of high

file insurance claims, fill out loan applications, request property tax relief and navigate other forms of aid. Thiel said city staff can direct people to these partners but are not allowed to help citizens fill out loan or grant applications.

“If folks are not sure where to start or what’s available, we are happy to work with them to navigate the systems,” she said. “The message I want people to have is that even if it’s a tough environment, they’re not alone in it.”