



First Independence Bank to open second location in Hennepin County services building



"This is an opportunity for our local Black community to have its own institution; something that can be a source of pride for our people. But it can also be a point of pride for the broader community to know that we have First Independence right here in our midst," said Damon Jenkins of the First Independence Bank. (Photo by Terry Faust)

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION

Should 3rd Precinct stay in Longfellow?

Residents discuss repairing existing building, reusing it, and tearing it down

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

Two years after the protests following the death of George Floyd, the 3rd Precinct building at E. Lake St. and Minnehaha Ave. is still surrounded by barbed wire and concrete bollards. Windows remain boarded after a fire and looting.

Two sessions were held in May 2022 to discuss what the community would like to see happen at the building. One was online on May 9, and the other in person at Squirrel Haus Arts on May 16. The events were sponsored by Longfellow Community Council, Seward Redesign, Lake Street Council, Longfellow Business Association and Longfellow Rising.

In small groups, residents shared their thoughts on whether they want a precinct in the neighborhood and how to address the trauma that remains. Then, they came

3RD PRECINCT » 3

BLACK-OWNED BANK TO OPEN ON E. LAKE ST.

By IRIC NATHANSON

Damon Jenkins and his team at First Independence Bank know they face special challenges.

"We are the new guys on the block, a new bank in town, so we have to work extra hard to gain the trust of our potential customers," said Jenkins, First Independence' Senior Vice President/Regional Director and a former Wells Fargo executive who grew up in south Minneapolis.

Jenkins' bank may be a financial newcomer to the Twin Cities, but it has a unique attribute that none of its competitors can claim: it is Minnesota's first and only Black-owned financial institution.

The idea for a new Black-owned bank took shape in 2020 following the death of George Floyd, when the area's leading lenders came together to look at new ways of addressing Minnesota's deep-seated pattern of racial disparities. That group included top executives from

Bank of America, Bremer Bank, Huntington Bank, U.S. Bank and Wells Fargo.

"We realized that in order for us to bridge the racial wealth gap, it would be better to have a Black-owned bank in our community in addition to all the rest of us," U.S. Bank's Tim Welsh told the *Star Tribune* earlier this year. "For a lot of historical reasons, many in the Black community don't have as much trust in traditional financial institutions as we would like." BLACK-OWNED BANK » 10

What's next for MPD?

After Minnesota Department of Human Rights issues report on discriminatory, race-based policing, the city considers how to move forward

By CAM GORDON

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights (MDHR) issued its findings and began work on a consent decree, in response to their investigation into civil rights violations of the city of Minneapolis on April 27, 2022.

The investigation, started following the murder of George Floyd, found that "there is probable cause that the city and MPD engage in a pattern or practice of race discrimination in violation of the Minnesota Human Rights Act. This includes a pattern of discriminatory, race-based policing as evidenced by racial disparities in how police officers use force, stop, search, arrest, and cite people of color, particularly Black individuals."

The report concluded that discriminatory, race-based policing is caused primarily by an organizational culture which emphasizes a paramilitary approach to policing, as well as an inadequate accountability system.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR MPD? » 16

LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS

Chelsea Rowles talks about the guides and tips this non-profit offers to help people discuss race, politics, and more

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

How can people have hard conversations that will bring them together versus driving them apart?

In a city that is engaged in tough conversations about policing, race and more, Chelsea Rowles suggests people consider Living Room Conversations.

The South High School graduate and lifelong south Minneapolis resident got involved in the nonprofit through an internship four years ago after earning her master of arts in psychology at the Uni-

versity of Minnesota. She is now a managing partner.

INTRODUCE US TO LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS.

Rowles: Living Room Conversations works to heal society by connecting people across divides – politics, age, gender, race, nationality, and more – through guided conversations proven to build understanding and transform communities. We are an essential first step in bridging divides in society. Our focus for this year is Belonging and Mental Health.

LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS » 16



"We are committed to helping communities build connections through conversation and we will do our best to help however we are able," said Chelsea Rowles.



More questions than answers at George Floyd Square open house

PAGE 2



The Messenger is celebrating 40 years in the neighborhood

PAGE 4



AGING WELL: Cans for Sam, All Elders United for Justice & more

PAGES 6-8

3RD PRECINCT >> from 1

together to share what was said with the larger group of about 75 people. About 90 attended the online session.

In person at the May 16 event were council members Jason Chavez and Robin Wonsley Worlobah, along with Minneapolis Interim City Coordinator Heather Johnson and a few other city staff. (Ward 12 council member Andrew Johnson was out on paternity leave.)

LCC Community Organizer Bennett Olupo observed that throughout the sessions, folks have mentioned the trauma associated with the Third Precinct building. "People felt abandoned by the police," he said.

Initially, police hunkered down around the Third Precinct building, aiming at the crowd that had gathered from positions above and on the ground. Later, they abandoned the building. People around the world watched on television and saw photos of the Third Precinct and surrounding buildings in the neighborhood looted and burned, including Minnehaha Lake Wine & Spirits, GM Tobacco, AutoZone, el Nuevo Rodeo building, Gandhi Mahal, MIGIZI, the Minnehaha Post Office, Wendy's and a multi-story housing complex. Residents woke up to smoke in the air and ash covering their houses.

Some want the Third Precinct building torn down and the lot leveled like those nearby. Others explored repairing it and reusing it, with and without the police presence.

"Half of us are for MPD not returning and half of us in support," reported Mollie O'Connor. As members of her small group discussed things further, they reached a middle ground, she said, and agreed there is a need for a precinct in the neighborhood "but it doesn't have to be in the precinct building."

The Third Precinct covers 58.4 square miles and is the city's largest. Its boundaries are I-94 to the Mississippi River, down to Highway 62 and over to 35W. About 103,000 people live in the area. Third Precinct officers were initially housed in the Minneapolis Convention Center and are currently based out of the downtown City of Lakes Building near city hall. Some residents are concerned that this means it takes officers too long to respond to calls in the area and the neighborhood isn't



Ward 2 Council Member Robin Wonsley Worlobah asked, "What do we have to do to regain trust?" Next to her is Ward 9 Council member Jason Chavez. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

safe because of that. Others pointed out the squad cars do not need to stay downtown but can be on patrol in the Third Precinct during their shifts.

"Until I feel safe, it's not a safe neighborhood," remarked one person of color who fears how the Minneapolis Police treat people of color.

There is no requirement that a precinct must be located in the area it serves, according to Minneapolis Interim City Coordinator Heather Johnston. The city has been looking at various sites in the Third Precinct, but has not made a decision about the location.

Throughout the meeting, folks suggested that other entities either fill the entire building or share it with police. These might include mental health providers, county services, violence prevention units, services for survivors of sexual assault, support for the unhoused, and more. Some want the building preserved as a memorial.

"People come from out of town to see George Floyd Square," remarked Aaron Hosansky. They also come to the Third Precinct site. His son was three and a half when "he moved out of town for the weekend." Hosansky is considering how he will tell his son about what happened in his city and at the Third Precinct site. "How can we tell our story?" he asked.

Residents pointed out that the lot at Minnehaha and E. Lake St. is a prime one in the neighborhood. It might be better suited to a use that is more community-driven.

There was a suggestion that police share the Metro Transit facility nearby.

TRAUMATIZED

Residents do not feel that their voices have been heard, and there hasn't been enough community engagement on this

issue. They want engagement that is equitable and empowering, not top down but rather bottom up. "Not enough people have been asked what this means to them," stated one speaker.

"Whatever happens won't go well unless we find a way to heal the trauma that has happened," said Doug Mork.

Ward 9 Council Member Jason Chavez (who took office in January 2022) believes that to address the trauma, "We need to listen to the people that live here." He added, "As a council member, we have fallen short." Chavez said that as a representative of the people, he will take action from what he hears. "We need to see structural change to the police department," he said.

The first time Robin Wonsley Worlobah was tear-gassed happened outside the Third Precinct. She was handing out food and supplies. Now as the Ward 2 council member, she is voting to pay out million of dollars to victims of police misconduct. "There is so much work we have to do," said Wonsley Worlobah. "I ran on it."

She envisions getting to a place "where that site is known for something else." She wants the world to be able to point and say, "Minneapolis got this right." She wants "us to show the world, we are committed to doing better."

Due to the misconduct, there is a distrust of police. "What do we have to do to regain trust?" asked Wonsley Worlobah. She supports doing restorative work, and proposed a resolution that would direct \$100,000 to hire a consultant to engage with community members more about the Third Precinct. It was passed on a 10-1 vote.

Powderhorn resident Duaba Unera pointed out that he and Sam Gould have been engaging with residents in conversa-

FROM THE ONLINE SESSION

On the evening of May 9, roughly 90 people attended an online 3rd Precinct meeting hosted by the Longfellow Community Council (LCC). People broke out into smaller groups to share concerns and questions, and then met back to hear from each other and community leaders. Minneapolis City Coordinator Heather Johnston, who oversees the department responsible for finding and managing facilities for all city departments, assured the group that no decisions have been made about the future of the building and everyone's input was welcome. People at meeting shared a wide spectrum of concerns. Some were open to seeing a return of the police station in the building, and some were strongly opposed to reusing the building as a police station.

LCC Community Organizer Bennett Olupo, wrote in a follow-up email to attendees, "We hope you were able to leave the meeting with a positive feeling or a feeling that things will get better. The LCC appreciated hearing all of the thoughts, feelings, and reflections during the meeting. The conversation is one step towards making progress in improving the neighborhood."

LCC continues to collect questions to send to city officials or others who may be able to answer them, and is taking an online vote on whether the site should become an active 3rd precinct police station again. The vote is intended to gather information and not lead to immediate action. It can be found at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfYAwt07p4Ckh-T08rVZJn9zkjH9bebJ9xBOJsyS-3R1t16N8w/viewform3rdPrecinctSurvey>

~ by Cam Gordon

tion about the holistic development of the East Lake Street corridor since the summer of 2020. They started at Chicago and E. Lake, and moved to the outdoor space north of Moon Palace Books in March of 2021. They established Confluence Studio, An East Lake Studio for Community Design, and are based out of the studio's autonomous mobile media unit. Learn more at confluence-studio.org.

LCC will be sharing its final report from the meetings. To learn more about next steps, sign up for the newsletter at longfellow.org.

GF SQUARE >> from 2

released its finding that the Minneapolis Police Department engages in a pattern or practice of race discrimination, in violation of the Minnesota Human Rights Act. See related article starting on page 1).

THE MEMORIAL

A number of people had questions about preserving the memorial and keeping the Square a sacred space – especially if the memorial is treated separately from road reconstruction.

Kado recalled an interviewee who said racism always seeks to erase history.

"As I've thought about this project and what a reconstruction project is, you're literally ripping up the pavement," said Kado. "It'll require further understanding around what a memorial looks like in that space and how we preserve and protect instead of erasing that memory."

One attendee asked if public works is coordinating with the George Floyd Global Memorial (GFGM) to ensure that the memorials are not disturbed and that guests can safely grieve and reflect.

According to Kado, the memorial process is still not defined and there are no plans to remove any items that are out there.

"This project won't be successful, nor will it ever be implemented without having more concrete plans in place around the memorial," he said.

There seemed to be a departure from the community-led approach when it came to "art" in the space, which GFGM considers offerings to the memorial. On the one hand, public arts administrator for Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED) Mary Altman, praised the groundbreaking work of GFGM caretakers to conserve the pieces. On the other hand, Altman said it's likely the city will commission art as part of the process and

that the city would bring on an artist or artists "to help build the vision for public art at the site."

The Minneapolis Arts Commission would have a role, and, as Altman described, it's a "complicated" process engaging and contracting with artists and getting the necessary approvals.

An attendee commented, "It sounds as though when talking about the city commissioning artworks or art being approved by the arts commission, the city's planning on complete control, despite saying it's led by a community-led process."

DESIGN

There were several calls to explore closing the intersection to vehicular traffic.

"We know a pedestrian plaza, pedestrian-only area, is very popular," said Kado.

Public works will also explore transit through the intersection. The D-Line was

originally slated to go through there, but according to Kado, those plans have been removed from the reconstruction and the D-Line is on detour routing. This is the same for the 5 and 23 buses which used to go through the intersection.

"This project will really determine if and how transit does come back to this space," said Kado.

There were a number of questions about other concerns – such as adjacent properties and businesses, faith-based organizations, air and water quality – that the project team said fell outside their purview.

About 50 questions still remained at the close of the two-hour meeting. According to Kado, no immediate changes are planned for the intersection this summer. Construction would begin in 2024.

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