

Hamline Midway Community Meeting on Public Safety & Youth Engagement  
*hosted by Councilmember Stark*  
November 9, 2016

**Highlights of St Paul Police (SPPD) Presentation from Deputy Chief Matt Toupal, Senior Commander Shari Gray, and Sgts Denaski & Diskerud**

- It isn't SPPD who is going to solve this problem, it's got to be the entire community.
- SPPD staff are trying a number of different approaches.
- It is not illegal to be kids being kids hanging out at the park or on the sidewalk, but once older adults started preying on young people, more criminal activity started happening.
- SPPD started looking at ringleaders and at businesses who were incubating unwanted behavior.
- A lot of the individuals involved in unwanted behavior weren't living in the neighborhood, just hanging out here, but police have been working on identified individuals and businesses.

**Joel Franklin, Community Ambassadors Program**

- Community Ambassadors Program started three years ago downtown with 18 community outreach workers, and they saw a 40% reduction in youth arrests downtown..
- Based on the success downtown, the program was expanded Citywide -- 30 ambassadors total, six working at a time in Western Police District.
- Works with Neighborhood House's gang reduction program, and the YWCA and Right Track for youth employment.
  - The first year young people were directed to Right Track, they filled 21 right track spots, which turned into 3 permanent hires, and the following year there were 30 right track spots with 4 permanent hires.
- Tim Simmons, ambassador in our neighborhood, had these comments specific to our area:
  - Ambassadors engage young people on the streets by using existing relationships or by building new relationships, then connecting young people with resources.
  - We can't be successful if youth don't want to engage, and if so, and if there's problematic behavior, then it becomes a police issue.
  - One person can be a bridge to their group of friends.
  - 15-24 year olds is the Ambassadors' target age group, and there were older people hanging out in Hamline Park this summer.

**Liz Lassiter, Hancock Recreation Center**

- Introduced Jasmine, Hancock's Community Recreation Leader; Gina Stokes, area supervisor; Victor Mister, Campus Director; Tabitha Mitchell, staff to the Youth Commission)
- We need to stop othering young people, stop pushing them out of spaces, and work with youth to develop programming they want.

- Programming happening at Hancock Rec:
  - Starting in January, Monday-Thursday, programming for tweens & teens
  - Open mic on third and fourth Wednesday nights; writing circle, game nights.
  - Teen scene Mondays from 3:30-5:30pm
  - Basketball, indoor volleyball, and soccer.
- Kids want to be somewhere safe with loving adults.
- Canvas Arts Program -- first and only for-teens and by-teens arts center where young people from the neighborhood have been hired to run with assistance from staff.
- Hoping to do a Friday evening teen program. \*\*If you want to volunteer, or know a program that could use a space, contact Liz.
- Have recently been taking programming outside the walls of the rec center, by going to Taco Bell, the Green Line, Hamline Park.

### **Community discussion**

1. Are the youth from our neighborhood or coming from elsewhere? SPPD: BOTH.  
Depends on question -- youth period, or youth involved in criminal activity. Social media has an influence on meet up locations for youth.
2. 5-8 year olds getting dropped off at Galtier Elementary playground for hours at a time.
3. Increased gunshots near Syndicate/Sherburne. SPPD: Citywide, shots fired are up from a year ago. Added a gun officer, who takes casings from shots fired and brings them to the BCA (Bureau of Criminal Apprehension) weekly.
4. Connect new Hamline Station residents with their near neighbors.
5. Activity near Sherburne/Asbury has been developing over many summers. Drug dealing, loitering. Some positive changes like the patrol at Rezek House. Compassion and understanding has to go beyond your block -- we need to have a true community response.
6. Compassion for youth. Ask why youth are outside at 1am -- homeless, nowhere to be? Can we work as a community to meet these needs?
7. Light rail proximity -- could we do satellite Hancock nearer to University to bridge the gap? Parks dept: parks has mobile recreation, and Gina Stokes will take this idea back to supervisor.
8. Grants available for address numbers or improved lighting? Russ: a third party like Hamline Midway Coalition or NeighborWorks Home Partners might be a partner for this idea.
9. Hamline Station apartments (Hamline & University) have opened, and have a very unused plaza.
10. Friends of Hamline Park -- how to program for next summer? Food/meal weekly or 2 times a month? Build relationships. Mobile camera shouldn't be at Hamline Park -- it just moves people away and intimidates them. Community policing has to mean something -- needs to be consistent outreach to neighborhood leaders about what neighbors are hearing.
11. We met before, and a list was circulated; didn't know about this meeting; how do we keep connection/communication going?

12. Is there gang activity? SPPD response: There was an emerging group called Snelling Block Boys; don't want to rush to labeling someone a gang member, but we did get there this summer. Violence between east and west side gang. The gang unit focuses on prevention, intervention, and enforcement. Gang unit had identified 35 youth under the age of 18, and invited to a dinner with resource staff present; their goal was to have 10 youth attend, but none showed. It wasn't a success, but did allow service providers to brainstorm.
13. The group dynamic feels threatening, hard to approach.
14. How can we prevent Green Line from being used as a tool? SPPD: Metro Transit has 15 new officers in the academy right now.
15. Hear a lot on the train--may be a good place to do outreach.
16. My wife was scared to death, and was happy to see the mobile camera at Hamline Park. Is it better than this summer to get off at the Snelling Green Line station? Response from Russ, SPPD: There are a couple things going on there -- homeless people outside of CVS, and youth hanging out too. It is better than over the summer. CVS is meeting with SPPD, pursuing off-duty officers and their own security people (who will do training with SPPD. Neighbors should express concerns to Metro Transit as well. Liz from Hancock is talking with the new manager at CVS to explore creating a mural in the CVS hallway.
17. There's fear in the room. Be careful about taking one situation and applying fear to a group/a person. Racism. Say hello. Turn lights on to show youth you have their backs versus telling them to move on.
18. Police did a lot this summer, including some progressive things like getting out of patrol cars, building relationships. Do more meetings like this and diversify the group.
19. My friend lives on Sherburne, an African American father of toddlers; he doesn't confront teens anymore, as he was assaulted two weeks ago.
20. Need to look for opportunities to talk with people. We all need to step up.
21. Where is Hamline Midway Coalition representation at this meeting?
22. Need youth in the room, working with youth leadership and having them lead us.
23. Job creation.
24. Element Boxing. It is ok to fight if you have self control, discipline. In a constructive way. Boxing clubs can give structure, support, to young people.
25. Martial arts -- mentors present that aren't there with an xbox or open gym. Present different options to youth. Grants, scholarships, funding being explored, including possible partnerships with Hancock Rec Center.