



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Mayor Christopher B. Coleman

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Joe Spartz
President
Greater Saint Paul BOMA
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Dear Joe:

I wanted to follow-up on BOMA's recent decision to forego support for the Downtown Youth initiative being piloted by the St. Paul Police Department (SPPD), Metro Transit Police (MTP) and the YWCA of St. Paul. Deputy Mayor Williams shared the conversation the two of you had on Friday, July 26.

I want to start by letting you know how disappointed we are in that decision. When BOMA first approached my office on this matter last summer, we quickly mobilized a series of short term fixes, including strengthening coordination between individual building security and SPPD, adding police presence in the core downtown area and building a stronger linkage to MTP officers. In addition, we began a process of looking at a longer term solution that involved bringing community outreach workers downtown to help engage and divert many of the youth who were being disruptive around the transit stops. That engagement was designed to tie to other community organizations and programs that could work with these young people to give them alternatives to hanging out downtown. We felt like we responded to BOMA in a fairly prompt and complete manner. My understanding from Deputy Mayor Williams is that BOMA declined support for this initiative under the belief that this effort represents only a short term fix—that it fails to address the underlying causes of these problems. While I applaud BOMA for its longer term view and certainly welcome its apparent interest in supporting underlying causes, the view of the Downtown Youth Initiative as a short-term or temporary "fix" is far from accurate. Engaging young people with familiar community faces and diverting them to the organizations that can put them on the right track is precisely the longer-term strategy that can make a difference in the long run. This pilot effort is designed to measure and demonstrate that. Early results seem to indicate that the strategy is working.

There are a number of key efforts going on downtown that I believe are germane to the interests of BOMA members—the task Force that is coming together around downtown homelessness and the search for a new, more dignified set of supports for the folks at the Dorothy Day Center, and the business-led visioning process for key downtown development sites, to name two. Along with tackling public safety and livability issues in downtown, I'd like to see BOMA take on a more proactive and supportive role in all of these efforts. With the opening of the Green Line less than 18 months away, and the explosive growth we see in such projects as the Regional Ballpark, the Penfield apartments and Lunds' grocery store, among others, it strikes me that standing off to the sidelines is less than productive.

I would strongly encourage BOMA to reconsider its stance on this matter and find a way to provide financial support for this important initiative. Not only will that send an important message to the many partners involved in this effort, it will also send an important signal to the Foundation community that has provided seed capital to this effort with the belief that the downtown real estate sector has a vested interest in these issues. I would be happy to discuss these matters further with you at any point. Should you have follow-up questions, feel free to call either myself or Deputy Mayor Williams.

Sincerely,



Christopher B. Coleman
Mayor

CC:
Chief Tomas Smith
Chief John Harrington
Deputy Mayor Paul Williams
Pat Skinner, BOMA Board Chair