

Resolution
of the
City of Minneapolis

By Gordon and Samuels

Recognizing Youth Violence as a Public Health Problem and Establishing a Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee

Whereas, one of the City Goals, A Safe Place to Call Home, is to ensure that all Minneapolis residents live in a healthy environment and feel safe in the City with a specific strategic direction that “Guns, Gangs, Graffiti” be eliminated; and

Whereas, On February 24 the City Council Authorized City staff to work with community foundations to co-sponsor a community dialogue focused on violence prevention; and

Whereas, a group of 28 community leaders and elected and appointed local government leaders met 3 times to begin the work of identifying key components of violence prevention activities, and developing indicators to measure progress; and

Whereas, this group strongly supported the recommendations outlined in this resolution that call for a recognition of youth violence as a public health crisis that requires a long term, comprehensive and strategic response and the establishment of a Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee to oversee further efforts to develop and implement that plan; and

Whereas, violence results in the tragic loss of life and serious injury, undermines families and neighborhoods, threatens the overall well-being of the City including the ability of children and adults to safely be outside their homes, and affects an overall sense of community connectedness and hope; and

Whereas, violence takes a disproportionate toll on people of color (especially African American males) and low-income neighborhoods with 6 out of 3 neighborhoods in the City having 90% of the homicides; and

Whereas, violence exacts a financial burden by increasing health care and public safety costs, with the average public criminal justice costs for a single incident of homicide estimated at 3 million dollars, and the costs for one non-fatal paralyzing injury resulting from gun violence may total 2-5 million dollars over the victim’s lifetime for health care, living expenses, and lost productivity; and

Whereas, the United States Surgeon General, the World Health Organization, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have all

identified violence as a priority public health issue challenging local, national, and global communities by its negative influence on morbidity, mortality, and quality of life; and

Whereas, homicides are the leading cause of death for Minneapolis residents aged 15-24 years, and the 65 deaths by homicide among persons in this age group between 2002 and 2004 were more than four times higher than the 15 motor vehicle deaths and the 14 accidental deaths recorded during that period; and

Whereas, 858 emergency room visits by Minneapolis residents between 2001 and 2005 resulted from assaults by firearms, and this total number of gunshot-related admissions reflects annual increases from 109 incidents in 2001 to 247 incidents in 2005; and

Whereas, the risk for violence among youth is increased by their developmental stage which is characterized by impulsiveness and inability to anticipate long term consequences yet it is not an inevitable occurrence but is a learned behavior that is the result of preventable and controllable factors in the life of youth, such as poverty, family instability, domestic abuse, mental or physical illness, educational failure, a lack of engagement in productive and affirming activities, and diminished relationships with supportive adults; and

Whereas, the risk for youth violence can be reduced by increasing connectedness to family and other supportive adults and institutions; by increasing commitment to academic achievement, through connection to a positive value system; and by being able to contribute to community wellbeing; and

Whereas, the factors that contribute to or protect against youth violence can be measured, as can the effectiveness of interventions addressing those factors, and the racial and socioeconomic disparities that persist; and

Whereas, the City of Minneapolis acknowledges that a public safety approach alone is insufficient and inadequate and that innovative, comprehensive solutions that engage government, community organizations, faith communities and businesses need to be sought; and

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by The City Council of the City of Minneapolis:

That it recognizes that youth violence is a public health problem and requires a strategic, long-term, and multi-faceted response; and

Be It Further Resolved that the City of Minneapolis endorses the establishment of a Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee to oversee

efforts to significantly reduce youth violence in Minneapolis by doing the following:

- Develop a multi-year implementation plan that includes components addressing outreach, education, communications and infrastructure to oversee implementation plans and outcomes. Special emphasis will be placed on strategies to engage and support parents and opportunities for youth to connect trusted adults and with their culture.

- Develop a timeline and assign responsibility for implementation of various plan components;

- Define and measure community-wide outcomes;

- Coordinate City and County efforts to prevent youth violence;

- Facilitate cross-community partnerships and communication among various groups with a stake in project outcomes;

- Identify gaps in services, policy and funding;

- Advise the City Council, Mayor and other policy makers and funders on needs for resources, programs and policies.

Be It Further Resolved that the Steering Committee consist of no more than 15 members, up to seven members appointed by the Mayor and up to eight members appointed by the City Council, to include: representatives from the communities most affected by youth violence including at least one representative each from a faith community and the business community; elected officials representing the City and the County; appointed officials representing public safety and public health. The membership of the panel shall reflect the ethnic and the cultural diversity of Minneapolis and be co-chaired by one community representative and one government representative.

Be It Further Resolved that the Steering Committee will report back to the City Council and the Youth Coordinating Board with a progress report no later than May 31, 2007.