

# 'LIBERATION'

The city of Minneapolis razed a once-infamous store where drug deals, murder and other mayhem plagued the community.

By [TERRY COLLINS](#), Star Tribune

The early-morning rumbling shook up the block. It hadn't sounded this loud around here in two years. That's about how long the once-notorious Big Stop Foods in north Minneapolis had been shut down.

Under a bright sun and clear blue skies, the store in the resurgent Jordan neighborhood was reduced to rubble Thursday.

"This is to the liberation of the North Side and the exorcism of crime from this neighborhood," proclaimed Council Member Don Samuels during a champagne toast. He was with a small, smiling contingent of Jordan residents who helped him cut his political teeth in front of the same store five years ago.

"Cheers!" they said, lifting their plastic cups in the air as the big, yellow bulldozer took another "whack" at the one-story brick-and-glass structure.

Unbeknownst to many residents and neighborhood leaders, the city had secretly laid plans to demolish the controversial corner convenience store at 26th and Knox Avenues N.

During a near six-year span, the Big Stop had been a refuge for teenage drug dealers, the scene of a brutal murder and, when a riot started across the street, the site where two Star Tribune reporters were beaten in an incident that drew national attention.

Subsequently, Big Stop became a target of police, who docked their "Big Blue" mobile command unit there and held news conferences to announce new crime-fighting initiatives. It sparked the creation of the city's Grocery Store Task Force, which keeps an eye on everything from fire code and food safety to police calls at stores around the city that are reputed trouble spots.

"This store was responsible for creating a domestic terrorist zone," Samuels said.

In 2005, activity around Big Stop prompted more than 200 police calls. Two months after the store's operating license was revoked in April 2006, calls to the area dropped almost 100 percent.

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