

# The 5th Ward Lowdown

Minneapolis City Council Member Blong Yang



Recognizing the North High Polars' Minneapolis City Champions football team at City Hall

Dear Neighbors and Friends,

This past year has been a learning experience as we (Yer, Niki, Sean and I) tackled a number of challenges. Learning the job has obviously been a lot to take in, but we've done a decent job as rookies (I think). With one year under our belt, expect better results this year. I would like to recap several important highlights from 2014.

## Development

Our biggest challenge on the Northside is to spur the same development that has occurred around the city. The best way to address equity is to build wealth and create opportunities, and I think the fastest way to equity is through building housing and creating jobs. Unison, the DC Group, LifeSource, and the Washburn Center for Children were all successes in bringing jobs to the Northside, but there is still a lot more to do on that front. Developments such as Broadway Flats, Commons at Penn, the Curve, and 800 West Broadway are all moving forward. I hope these developments will help to spur more development, so that we can move closer to equity.

## Equity

My comments at the budget public hearing on December 12th, 2014:

*I want to make it explicitly clear to everyone that there is nothing that is more important to me than making my constituents' lives better. I represent some of the poorest and most diverse areas of the city. Equity to me is not a buzzword; it is not a campaign promise. Equity for me means that the people I represent have the resources to give them the economic power, the educational power, and the political power to be equal to the residents of the better sections of the city. Equity means that the ward I represent is recognized for the economic vitality that exists within it. Equity means a whole lot more than \$150,000 handed out by the city.*

## Public Safety

The men and women of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) work hard, are selfless, and are committed to public service. But, as elected officials, we need to remain vigilant about our expectation that every single police officer treat every person they encounter with as much respect and dignity as possible. MPD is a very good organization, but there is still a lot of room for improvement. We held two community forums in the ward to engage and talk about community-police relations and diversifying the MPD. We worked with the Council and Mayor to secure additional resources and patrols for North Minneapolis during the summer. And, we supported the body camera pilot project, which equipped 36 police officers with body cameras in three precincts, including our precinct (the 4<sup>th</sup>).

Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to more heavy lifting on your behalf. If there's anything our office can do to better serve, please let us know.

Sincerely,

## 2015 Goals and Priorities

I hope to increase livability in the 5th Ward through working with the different departments and neighborhood groups to make sure that our neighborhoods get as much attention as other parts of the city.

First, I intend to introduce an ordinance about the sale of flavored tobacco products early in the year. This issue was brought to my attention by Breathe Free North and the Minneapolis Youth Congress. Many children start smoking because of flavored tobacco products. I believe this will be important for the health of the people and a good way to keep kids from picking up smoking.

While there are a number of transportation and transit projects planned in the upcoming year, I want to see 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue North be reconstructed and resurfaced as soon as possible. The Public Works Department has been active on the project in 2014 and held several public meetings for input. The work is planned to start in 2015 and expected to be completed in 2016. If you live on 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue N and have not been contacted about the project, please [contact my office](#) as soon as possible.



*DC Group's groundbreaking event*



*Commons at Penn's groundbreaking event*

There's too much trash and neglect in alleys and on empty lots for the amount of pride we all have and take in our community. My office gets too many complaints about this. We need greater respect for one another, and the communities we live in. I will do my best to work with Solid Waste and Regulatory Services to address these types of issues and problem properties across the ward. Contact my office or 311 to report any issues with illegal dumping or trash.

North Minneapolis is only as strong as the parts that comprise it and I want to make West Broadway one of the greatest corridors in the city. We must continue to attract and revitalize the community by filling up the empty storefronts, housing units, and lots with local businesses, homeowners, and new homes respectively.

## Step-up interns

The STEP-UP summer internship program is now accepting applications. To apply for the City's STEP-UP program, go to [www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/metp/cped\\_stepup](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/cped/metp/cped_stepup). Last year alone, the City hired over 400 interns from Ward 5. Anyone needing help with the application process can contact Tammy Dickinson at **612-673-5041**.

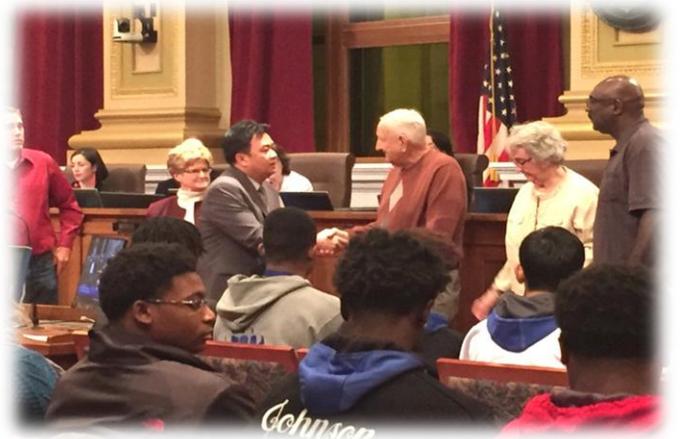
### All STEP-UP applicants must:

- Live in Minneapolis.
- Be 14-21 years old by June 1.
- Not be currently enrolled in college (post-secondary enrollment is acceptable).
- Be eligible to work in the country by June 1 and have proper documentation.
- Meet income guidelines

## 2015 Budget Highlights

The Minneapolis City Council passed a budget with the council's stamp on it. More than half of Minneapolis homeowners will feel no increase, or will feel a decrease, in the City portion of their property taxes. The following highlights make investments in three of my most important goals, increasing public safety, economic development, and affordable housing:

- Along with Council Member Warsame, I ensured that **Project Lookout**, a public housing safety initiative, was funded this year. The Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council (MHRC) staffs and administers the Project Lookout volunteer crime watch patrol program with up to 250 volunteers annually patrolling 24 of MPHA's highrises to help keep them safer for residents.
- \$1,140,000 in capital dollars over two years to implement a program of **body cameras** for the police department.
- \$800,000 for two **recruit classes** for the Fire Department.
- \$50,000 for the Fire Department's **Fire and Emergency Service Explorer Program**, which encourages young people in Minneapolis public high schools to enter firefighting and emergency management as a career, and offers hands-on leadership development.
- \$346,000 for an additional four **911 operators**.
- Fully funding the **Affordable Housing Trust Fund** with \$10.5 million.
- Two new positions will be created in the City Coordinator's office to focus exclusively on **racial-equity** work.
- Planning dollars allocated for the redevelopment of the **Upper Harbor Terminal**, so that North Minneapolis has its own valuable riverfront amenities.
- \$150,000 will fund staff and program resources to leverage the new **Clean Energy Partnership**, a first-of-its-kind City-utility agreement reached with Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy.
- \$100,000 to be added in the **Business Technical Assistance Program**, which helps develop entrepreneurship in communities of color.



*Recognizing Northside youth sports fixtures, Gary Wilson for his service to the community*

## Be informed about snow emergencies

Residents, workers and visitors have a number of ways to learn when Snow Emergencies are declared and what to do when they are. The more ways people can be informed about Snow Emergency, the more prepared they will be to do their part, and the less likely they will be to be towed because they didn't know one was declared.

- Call the automated **612-348-SNOW** hotline. If a Snow Emergency is in effect, the hotline will have information on that day's parking restrictions that drivers need to follow to avoid tickets and tows. The hotline includes information in English, Spanish, Somali and Hmong.
- Go to [www.minneapolismn.gov/snow](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/snow) to find out whether a Snow Emergency has been declared. Also, check out the [street lookup](#), which lets you put in an address or a neighborhood to see where you can park during a Snow Emergency.
- Email and text alerts – Go to [www.minneapolismn.gov/snow/snow\\_esubscribe](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/snow/snow_esubscribe) to subscribe.
- News releases are sent to the media so TV, radio stations and other news outlets can inform their viewers and listeners that a Snow Emergency is in effect.
- Social Media – [www.facebook.com/MinneapolisSnowEmergency](http://www.facebook.com/MinneapolisSnowEmergency). Twitter - [@MinneapolisSnow](https://twitter.com/MinneapolisSnow). Both the Facebook and Twitter pages will tell fans and followers when a Snow Emergency is declared.

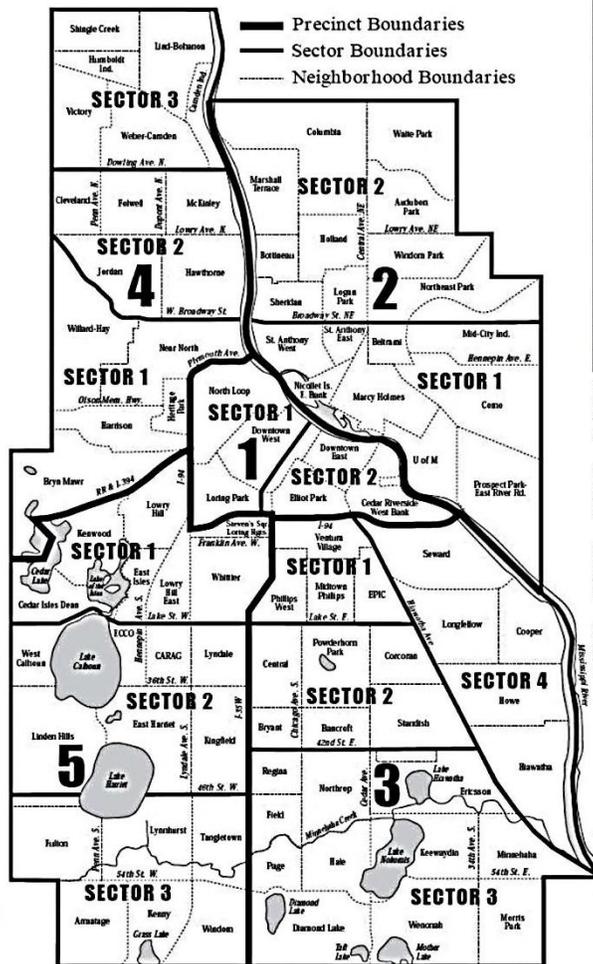


## 5 Ride-Alongs in 5 Different Precincts

**Precinct 4:** I rode with an inspector. We had the opportunity to discuss crime in the precinct and in specific hotspots.

**Precinct 1:** I rode with an officer who was one of the 36 who volunteered for the body camera pilot. He didn't have to use it during the part of the shift that included this ride-along. It was a very cold day and we were rolling around the precinct. We made a stop near a bridge. He climbed up to under the bridge to check every crevice for homeless people, not because he wanted to move them along, but because he was concerned for their health. He would've given his coat to save anyone from the unbearable cold. Towards the end of the ride-along, which was the end of his 10-hour shift, he received a call about a rape victim. He didn't hesitate to respond and we spent a good amount of time getting the victim's statement.

**Precinct 5:** I rode with an officer around the precinct. As we were cruising around, we both witnessed a car crash right in front of our eyes. The officer spent the next hour managing the crash site, taking statements, and ensuring the safety of those involved. He drove both parties to the precinct headquarters to save them from the bitter cold. I then walked with a beat cop through parts of Uptown. The businesses knew the officer by name and welcomed him with smiles.



**Precinct 2:** Community policing takes time and community to work. I walked a beat with an officer who was responsible for a certain area of Northeast Minneapolis. He had been the beat officer there about twelve years. He knew practically everyone and it seemed as though everyone genuinely loved him. They were all on a first name basis. The community in the area raised money for the MPD to have him there and to provide him with needed equipment and space. I rode with a lieutenant on a cold day. We responded to a 911 call about a young girl who was roaming the streets appearing lost. We looked and looked and eventually found her safe and sound.

**Interesting Facts and/or Observations**  
Officers are expected to search their squad cars before they begin their patrols. If a civilian is on a ride-along, that squad car cannot be in a hot pursuit chase. I attended two roll calls and got to see how each shift starts. Roll calls are a time for officers and their supervisors to check in, get information, and socialize.

**Precinct 3:** I rode with a sergeant and there was some good action here. We responded to an emotionally disturbed individual call where we entered a home and diffused a domestic situation. We responded to a potentially volatile roommate situation in which the sergeant had to pull his gun out and handcuff a possible suspect. Eventually, after cooperation and a discussion, it was determined that there was a misunderstanding and the possible suspect was released.

### Conclusions

I did a ride-along in every precinct in Minneapolis on various shifts. I got a feel for the work and rhythm of the shifts. (And, I am very conscious of the fact that MPD's very best were assigned to give me a ride-along.) What I was pleasantly surprised at was how human each of these police officers was. While on the ride-alongs, we conversed about their career choices, their values, and their hopes and desires for Minneapolis. Overall, I had a good experience seeing our police in action. The job of being a police officer is at times thankless and it's a truly difficult job. We, as citizens, want robots (something perfect) as police officers, when in reality we have humans. They make mistakes, they have emotions, and they have opinions. But, I believe they try as hard as humanly possible to protect with courage and to serve with compassion.

### Get to know the Ward 5 office

I value the calls from constituents to our office and have pride in the hard work my staff puts in to provide you with excellent constituent services. The work we do every day is essential to improving the quality of life for all the residents of the ward. Even though the City has resources at your disposal (i.e. 311), we also want to be accessible to you.



**Blong Yang:** 5th Ward council member, resides in the Jordan Neighborhood, went to 10 out of the 13 North High football games in 2014, and enjoys watching soccer.

**Sean Broom:** policy aide, a soon-to-be dad, was a former aide to Congressman Keith Ellison, and has worked in North Minneapolis for three years.

**Yer Yang:** council associate, is the gate-keeper to the office, speaks several languages, and loves to cook delicious food.



To our outgoing policy aide, **Niki Mitchell:** Thank you for your service. If you have any questions, please [contact my office](mailto:contact@ward5.org). 612-673-2205.