

## **Responsible Economic Development in North Omaha: Scooters, 30<sup>th</sup> & Ames**

Below is the full statement I made at the ribbon cutting and Grand Opening of Scooters at 30<sup>th</sup> and Ames:

Greetings to all attendees to this very significant occasion. Special greetings to both the scooters corporate family and the Julian Young business family. I appreciate the small space on this momentous program.

I stand before you in several capacities:

- I am a native Omahan born and raised in this my beloved north Omaha
- I am 75, I've witnessed and have a unique perspective on the history of this community
- I am one voice among the North Omaha leadership and run a community-based organization, Black Votes Matter

I have memories of north Omaha when it was rich in culture, community, commerce, and church, in spite of segregation and being populated by mostly poor residents. We were unified and self-contained.

I watched the destruction of the community from planned and unplanned events, including isolation, riots, freeways, brain drain, racism, drastic employment loss and lack of public or private investment.

Today, north Omaha is on the move. Investment is estimated at nearly \$1million. While poverty reigns and high unemployment persist, there is renewed employment opportunities, housing is up, as are many other positive indicators. BUT, we need growth in north Omaha, based on, for-profit firms, entrepreneurship. Finally, there is the recognition that north Omaha is a "diamond in the rough".

The 24<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor is showing promise. 30<sup>th</sup> Street has a new development with 75 north. Still, in my estimation there are two hubs, 24<sup>th</sup> & Lake and 30<sup>th</sup> & Ames, notwithstanding, western Ames and other potential.

Now 30<sup>th</sup> and Ames, you have jump started a renewed vigor. Congratulations Scooters.

Also, what needs to be emphasized about this development. Investment, yes. Jobs, yes. Jobs, yes; but not just development, but responsible development.

Not just the coffee shop. This development used north Omaha businesses, north Omaha and black contractors, and service firms to renovate and produce the space. Contracting with over 10 local and black firms. This development, also recognized the value to reach beyond this building and is partnering with local businesses and organizations to bring positive community benefits to impact our great community. I cite the relationship with Scooters and the Great Plains Black Museum.

I commend Scooter and the leadership of Julian Young and wife, for the vision, investment and the community benefits you are addressing. Every development in north Omaha should be put to the test of responsibility and be evaluated on its commitment to community benefits, not just its financial business model. Reference my last column article “**Emerging Issues for North Omaha**”

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