

## PRESS KIT

# Beyond the Barricades

The Economic Cost of 38th & Chicago  
otherwise known as George Floyd Square

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### A Press Conference on Economic Justice for Black Business Owners

**Hosted by**  
Black Wall Street Minnesota

**Date**  
Thursday, July 16, 2026

**Time**  
1:30 p.m.

**Location**  
George Floyd Square Event Center  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Purpose**  
This press conference brings together Black business owners, community leaders, legal advocates, and supporters to address the lasting economic impact experienced by businesses operating in the George Floyd Square corridor.

- Speakers will discuss:
- The economic consequences of prolonged business disruption
  - The impact of barricades and restricted access on commercial activity
  - Ongoing concerns regarding business recovery and redevelopment
    - The need for timely legal resolution and accountability
  - A call for equitable economic justice for Black-owned businesses

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*“Justice is not complete until economic justice reaches  
the businesses that helped build this community.”*



## **PRESS CONFERENCE OVERVIEW**

The Black Economic Recovery Initiative is a community engagement effort launched by Black Wall Street Minnesota to identify practical solutions that strengthen Black businesses, neighborhoods, and businesses throughout the George Floyd Square corridor. Business owners will gather to share firsthand accounts of their experience operating businesses in the area. The briefing is intended to provide direct access for media and the public to hear individual perspectives from local business owners regarding their operations, challenges, and views on the future of the corridor.

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**OPENING STATEMENT** - We are standing here today at the Intersection of 38<sup>th</sup> & Chicago, a place the world knows as George Floyd Square—but where too many Black business owners feel unheard, unseen, and unprotected and uncompensated.

This location has become a global symbol of justice. But for the people who built businesses here, who hired workers, who invested their life savings into this corridor, it has also become a place of deep economic loss, prolonged uncertainty, and unanswered questions from the very institutions that are supposed to protect them.

In the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, this area experienced not only grief and protest—but also prolonged disruption, contested control, and what many community members describe as a “no-go zone environment” that severely restricted access, traffic, safety, and commerce. Whether through formal designations or informal conditions on the ground, the result was the same: businesses suffered, and many never recovered.

Black business owners here are not asking for symbolism. Black business owners want to thrive. They are asking for fairness. They are asking for the same standard of justice the business community on Lake Street received during Metro Surge.

Instead, what they have faced is delay, fragmentation, and political theater—years of conversations, studies, commissions, and public statements, while lawsuits remain unresolved and livelihoods continue to deteriorate. The harm is not theoretical. It is documented. It is ongoing. And for many, it is devastating.

We also must be honest about equity at this moment. Justice should not depend on who you are or how you identify. Justice is not supposed to be conditional. Yet too often, Black, business owners are most directly impacted in this corridor—many of them Black male entrepreneurs—feel as though their claims are being pushed to the margins of the conversation.

That is unacceptable.

We are here to say clearly: the economic harm suffered by these business owners cannot continue to be ignored, minimized, or delayed. The lawsuit that has been pending for years must move forward with urgency. The losses are real. The impact is measurable. And the responsibility of leadership cannot be avoided.

This is not about revisiting trauma for attention. This is about correcting continuing injustice. It is about restoring what was taken, stabilizing what remains, and ensuring that economic destruction is not treated as collateral damage without accountability.

George Floyd Square should not only represent a moment in history—it must also reflect justice in practice. And justice includes economic justice for the people who built, sustained, and invested in this community long before the world started watching it.

We are here today to make sure their voices are no longer delayed, dismissed, or diverted. It is time for resolution. It is time for accountability. And it is time for justice to finally include the business owners of this corridor.

We are gathered today to hear directly from business owners in the George Floyd Square corridor as they share their individual experiences operating businesses in this area. Each speaker represents their own business and perspective. This is an opportunity for those voices to be heard directly by the public and media. We ask for respect and attention as each participant shares their experience. We will proceed with opening remarks, business owner statements, and then media questions.

### **BLACK BUSINESS RECOVERY AND ECONOMIC ACCOUNTABILITY**

The purpose is to bring attention to the experiences of Black owned businesses impacted by the events and policies surrounding George Floyd Square and to encourage meaningful discussion regarding economic recovery.

### **WE CALL ON THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS TO TAKE THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:**

#### **1. Commission an Independent Economic Impact Assessment**

Conduct a comprehensive, independent analysis of the economic impact experienced by businesses operating within and surrounding George Floyd Square since 2020. The assessment should examine business closures, revenue losses, employment reductions, property impacts, customer access, and relocation costs to establish a clear and transparent record of the economic consequences experienced by the business community.

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#### **2. Provide Full Transparency for Public Investments and Expenditures**

Release a complete public accounting of all public funds allocated to George Floyd Square since 2020, including expenditures related to planning, consulting, redevelopment, public engagement, public safety, infrastructure, and business

recovery initiatives. Transparency is essential to building public trust and evaluating whether investments have effectively supported the businesses most directly affected.

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**3. Develop and Implement a Black Business Economic Recovery Plan**

Establish a measurable, results-driven recovery strategy focused on stabilizing, rebuilding, and expanding Black-owned businesses impacted by prolonged disruption in the George Floyd Square corridor. The plan should include access to capital, technical assistance, commercial redevelopment opportunities, and long-term business growth initiatives with clearly defined performance benchmarks.

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**4. Establish Direct and Ongoing Engagement with Affected Business Owners**

Create a formal process for meaningful and sustained dialogue between city leadership, economic development officials, and the business owners directly impacted by conditions in George Floyd Square. Those who have experienced the economic consequences firsthand should have a permanent seat at the table as decisions are made regarding the future of the corridor.

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**5. Make a Long-Term Commitment to Black Economic Development**

Adopt policies and make strategic investments that strengthen Black-owned businesses, expand opportunities for commercial property ownership, increase access to capital, promote entrepreneurship, create quality jobs, and build generational wealth in historically underserved communities. Lasting economic justice requires sustained investment—not temporary initiatives.

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**6. Establish a Permanent Black Business Advisory Council**

Create a permanent advisory council composed primarily of Black business owners, economic development professionals, and community leaders to provide ongoing recommendations regarding economic policy, redevelopment, procurement opportunities, and business sustainability in Minneapolis. The council should serve as an independent voice to ensure that the experiences and expertise of Black entrepreneurs remain central to future economic development decisions.

**WHY THIS MATTERS**

Black-owned businesses are essential to the economic health and stability of our communities. They create jobs, expand opportunities, and transform neighborhoods through investment and entrepreneurship. Yet when those businesses suffer significant economic harm, justice requires more than acknowledgment—it requires action. Economic justice is rooted in ownership, equal protection, accountability, and the fair application of public policy. The business owners impacted in George Floyd Square deserve to have their experiences documented, their losses recognized and compensated, and their claims resolved with the urgency and fairness afforded to every member of our community.

## **IMPORTANT NOTE FOR REPORTERS**

“Multiple Black owned businesses reported severe economic losses, some closed permanently, and business owners have publicly stated that the prolonged closure and uncertainty surrounding George Floyd Square contributed to those outcomes.” (**Red Lake Nation News**)

## **PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING**

- Center business owner voices and lived experiences.
- Provide a public forum for sharing economic conditions.
- Encourage direct engagement with media and stakeholders.
- Elevate community-driven perspectives on business sustainability.
- Support open dialogue regarding long-term corridor development.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

- Local business owners
  - Community stakeholders
  - Faith leaders
  - Political leaders
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## **BUSINESS OWNER PROFILES**

### **Ralph’s VIP Barber Lounge, LLC**

Ralph Wilson founded Ralph’s VIP Barber Lounge, LLC about 5 years before Floyd’s death and by 2019, it was generating profits of \$82,300. By 2022 again due to withdrawal of police and placement of barricades, Mr. Wilson earned only \$48,000 in profits. Over 10 years, this annual loss of \$34,300 would equate to \$343,000. Mr. Wilson was also shot by a gun and that went through both thighs and hit a testicle, which was removed from his body as a result during surgery. In addition to \$343,000 in lost profits, I seek \$500,000 for the shooting and loss of his testicle. \*

### **Sincere Detailing Pros – LLC**

Ed Reed made gross profits of \$343,218 in 2018 and he is now out business. Over a ten-year period, the city’s withdrawal of police and placement of barricades which prevented traffic from getting to his auto detailing shop and put him out of business, Mr. Reed will lose \$3,432,180 in profits. \*

### **Smoke In the Pit**

This iconic Minneapolis barbeque chicken spot increased revenues for years prior to Floyd’s death and peaked at \$344,726. By 2022, sales had diminished to \$176,854, a loss of \$167,872 over ten years equates to \$1,678,720 in lost revenues. \*

**\* The dollar amounts in this document do not in any way assess emotional agonies suffered by business owners named above. Almost all of them experienced marital strife with some being divorced, all of them harassed, several of them being either shot with a gun or**

**witnessing murders and all of them experiencing bullet holes shot through the windows of their businesses.**

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**THE ASK:**

1. **A meeting with city leadership** to discuss the impacts they have experienced and hear directly from affected business owners.
2. **A transparent review** of the circumstances surrounding the economic impacts they describe, including opportunities for public discussion and access to relevant information.
3. **A plan for a Revitalized Black Wall Street District** for the affected commercial corridor, developed with input from business owners, residents, and other stakeholders.
4. **Meaningful inclusion of business owners** in future planning and decision-making processes affecting the area.
5. **Clear communication and accountability**, including updates on decisions that affect the corridor and opportunities for ongoing engagement.

Today we are asking for city leadership to stop holding up the process. a transparent review of the issues raised by affected business owners, and a collaborative plan for the future of this commercial corridor. History will remember George Floyd Square as a place where the world demanded justice. But history should also remember whether justice extended to the Black business owners who invested their lives in this community. Their businesses created opportunity, employment, and hope long before the world's cameras arrived. Today, we are asking that their stories not be forgotten, their sacrifices not be minimized, and their pursuit of economic justice not be delayed any longer. Justice is only complete when it includes the people who helped build this community and whose livelihoods were forever changed by its history.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**GEORGE FLOYD SQUARE BUSINESS OWNERS**

**ECONOMIC IMPACT BRIEFING & PRESS CONFERENCE**

**Location:** George Floyd Square Event Center, 37<sup>th</sup> & Chicago Avenue South, Minneapolis

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