

LAKEFRONT OUTLOOK

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Not clean enough

To the Editor:

The streets in Bronzeville will be a little bit cleaner these days. It's an election year. But I say, they are not clean enough.

We want more than a few more garbage pick-ups and a couple of shiny trash cans on our corridors. We are fed up with what looks like a community of poor and indifferent people. Homeowners are downright angry about our streets, trash-strewn vacant lots and alleys.

Of course it is an election year and the Dorothy Tillman machine is clearly underway and active once again. Trust me. There will be more cleaning resources on the streets for the next 11 months than ever before. There will be an illusion of improvements in the 3rd Ward. It's election year, do what you have to do to get the votes.

Little if any activity has emanated from our 3rd Ward office. Our neighbors are rapidly establishing their own voice. Families are standing up for a cleaner Bronzeville.

People want clean streets and to be proud of their investments. We want to walk our neighborhood without dodging filth and debris. Renters that pay over \$1,000 per month are justified in demanding more wastebaskets, cleaner alleys and garbage removal. Property owners expect their tax dollars to work for them. We should have permanent sanitation services, not just during the election season. New investors clearly have a vision in mind, and are moving towards realizing their plan. We are calling 311 and documenting their reports as never before. Our public officials must be held accountable for results. Sam Tidwell, supervisor of Streets and Sanitation in the 3rd Ward, has made some improvements. However, Tidwell's work thus far isn't enough. Is the Streets and Sanitation office more responsive than before? Yes. Is there some degree of improvement? Probably yes. Is there a consensus among neighbors that the Bronzeville community is cleaner? Heck no! New people are discovering the importance of getting involved and are growing tired of walking through garbage daily.

My attitude about cleanliness in Bronzeville has changed for several reasons because my wife and I purchased a home here. I was blown away by the trash that I had to clean from in front of my house everyday! The amount of filth is overwhelming and I am actually ashamed when friends visit. If I owned a retail business in Bronzeville, I would want customers from all walks of life to visit my business. Since I try my best to purchase locally, I decided to ask a few retailers about their apathy and they gave me some answers. Retailers felt that people in the neighborhood litter out of practice and they don't care. Many felt that there were not enough wastebaskets to go around. The Streets and Sanitation people and the alderman have given up on this subject. No wonder most of my neighbors shop for everything outside of the neighborhood. Unless someone does something, local shopping will always be marginal. Our small businesses will shut down.

Why would a franchise owner of a White Hen Pantry, Starbucks, Jamba Juice or Applebee's ever want to invest in Bronzeville under these conditions? As an entrepreneur, I know what perception does to a neighborhood and how this affects small businesses. What would be my attitude if I were turned down by a corporate decision because the Douglas and Grand Boulevard community didn't look or feel right for a Chipotle franchise? I can only imagine what the new businesses in the neighborhood must be going through when it comes to downright filth and our tolerance of it! They must be frustrated.

Public officials, business stakeholders and volunteers must connect on the vision of cleanliness. Beautification helps everything else in our neighborhood succeed. I decided to convey my findings to our alderman. I stated my premise and organized my findings in a beautifully outlined report. Surely the alderman should order more wastebaskets and help with funding resources for permanent streets and sanitation initiatives. Bronzeville would be on the road to beautification.

Clean streets for today and tomorrow.

Mell Monroe

 **letter**
to the **editor**