

## **Melvin Carter III, St. Paul City Council member**

Interviewed by Peter Myers at Frogtown Square, St. Paul, Feb. 2011

Q What are your earliest memories of University Avenue

A It's strange. My earliest memories of University Avenue are things like walking up to the store, walking up to Walter Brothers to get some candy and baseball cards. That's one of them. Knowing that there was something going on in this Faust Theater that I wasn't supposed to go to. I think probably my earliest memories of University Avenue are my parents trying to keep me away from University Avenue! I lived just a couple of blocks from University Avenue and we'd walk up to Wendy's to get a hamburger or walk up to Uni-Dale Mall or walk up to some of the shops right on University Avenue near Western Avenue.

Q How have you seen the Avenue change over the years?

A It's changed quite a bit. We're at Dale and University right now and this intersection alone has really changed from the epicenter of the place where your parents didn't want you to be, to all of a sudden having one of our best libraries in the City being right across the street here and now this fantastic development that we're in today that's just in the process of opening up.

Q Describe University Ave. today.

A The first thing I'd say is you can take a tour around the world on a plate on University Avenue. We have some of the best food from all over the world on University Avenue and the reason is because it's this Avenue that connects so many different communities, so many different cultures, who live in both the Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhood along there. We're as diverse as diversity gets if you want to talk about the color and the culture and the religion and the language of the people who do business and work and just walk up and down University Avenue, and if you want to talk about the size of the businesses – we have the small, mom and pop grocery store or barber and we've got all the way up to Wal-Mart on the other end of the Avenue.

Q What do you think Frogtown Square is going to do for Frogtown?

A Frogtown Square is an important development, not just for Frogtown but for this whole kind of community around it, and really I think for the entire city. Because as we're building light rail on University Avenue we really have to take advantage of the nodes and Dale and University is one of the critical nodes that we really have to take advantage of. Naming it Frogtown Square was important as well. When I was a child, the name Frogtown had certain connotations. It's certainly a part of this re-branding of Frogtown, of the Frogtown community as a vibrant, thriving, really fun neighborhood to be in.

Q What would you like to see ten years from now?

A I'd like to see people walking down the street. I'd like to see sidewalk cafes, just neighborhood, street level kind of vitality, people from the neighborhood working on the Avenue, shopping on the Avenue, living on the Avenue. And my goal is that as we get a train running and see thousands and thousands of people kind of riding the train up and down the Avenue, that we've got a place here that we can look out the window of a train and go, wow I really want to check this place out.

Q Is there anything else you want to say?

A I think we're really building the heart of St. Paul right here along University Avenue in so many ways – it's the center of the city, it's one of the main east/west drags of the city. But between the people that have sort of planted their lives and their fortunes on University Avenue, between the fact that we're in the process of building the biggest infrastructure investment our State has ever seen right here – this really is the beginning of a new chapter for not just University Avenue. And not just this neighborhood, but for St. Paul.