

Kansas City Council to consider naming police station after Leon Jordan

BY LYNN HORSLEY - THE KANSAS CITY STAR

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Two Kansas City Council members are formally proposing to name the new East Patrol station after former African-American political leader and police detective Leon Jordan.

Council Members Jermaine Reed and Melba Curls have introduced a resolution to name the police station, currently under construction at East 27th Street and Prospect Avenue, after Jordan.

It would be the first time a Kansas City police station bore the name of an individual rather than the part of town it serves. The measure is scheduled to go to the council's Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on Thursday for debate.

"I would say there is a very strong support within the community for the naming of the station after Leon Mercer Jordan," Reed said Friday.

Reed said he and Curls solicited comments on the proposal for more than a month before drafting their resolution. They held one major public hearing but also discussed the idea with church, civic and social groups and got online submissions.

Other names that surfaced included former City Councilman Alvin Brooks, former City Councilwoman Joanne Collins and former Kansas City Royals second baseman Frank White.

But Reed said a solid majority, including hundreds who signed petitions, supported naming the East Patrol station after Jordan, who helped found the African-American political club Freedom Inc. after he retired as a police lieutenant.

Jordan was assassinated in 1970 outside the Green Duck Lounge and Grill, his Prospect Avenue tavern located just north of the East Patrol campus site.

The \$74 million campus will include not just the police station but also a crime laboratory, evidence storage room and community meeting room. Weather permitting, the target completion date is December 2015.

Reed said naming the station after Jordan is appropriate because of all he did for the African-American community. Among other accomplishments, he helped build better relationships between the Police Department and the black community, and Reed said that's especially noteworthy at a time of controversy about police in places like Ferguson, Mo., and Staten Island in New York.

"Here in Kansas City, we have a unique relationship with our Police Department," Reed said. "Here's a community wanting to come together and name something after an individual who helped pave the way for where we are today."

One justice advocate, Alvin Sykes, has said that naming a police station after a person humanizes the police, and naming this police station after a black man shows how far the city has come in police/community relations.

Mayor Sly James has argued that the city's practice of naming its patrol buildings for their locations works well. He was concerned that setting a precedent with this new name could affect other police facilities. But he said he would be amenable to naming a community room in the new building or even renaming Prospect Avenue after Jordan.

Jordan's legacy is not without controversy. The Star in the past has revealed his loose associations with organized crime figures that may have contributed to his murder. But others have pointed out that the circumstances of his death should not disqualify him from consideration.

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