

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to the Prospect Park East River Road Neighborhood, 5-19-08

Cam's next Prospect Park Office Hours:
Pratt School, May 20, 9:30-11am

Items:

- 1) Central Corridor
- 2) Safety & Community Organizing Interns
- 3) Idling Ordinance
- 4) Air Quality Ordinance
- 5) Planning Commission Approvals
- 6) University Episcopal Center
- 7) Functional Yield for Bicycles
- 8) Free Speech and RNC
- 9) Pre-Employment Drug Testing
- 10) Disparities Resolution
- 11) No Heat / Low Heat
- 12) Mentoring Program
- 13) Commuter Choice Awards
- 14) Green Institute and Lead
- 15) Phthalates
- 16) Openings on Boards and Commissions

- 1) Last Friday, the Council passed an item for our Legislative Agenda calling for the Governor and Legislators to put the \$70 million back into the Central Corridor Project. As you've likely heard, this request was granted. The resolution also made clear that the City is opposed to delaying the project. There are a number of public hearings coming up, at which you can give your views on the proposed project:
 - **May 29, 5-7pm** - Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Hennepin and Ramsey counties' regional rail authorities joint public hearing, Goodwill/Easter Seals, 553 Fairview Ave N, St. Paul. Open house at 4pm.
 - **June 3, 1:30-3:30pm** - City of Minneapolis, City Council chambers, Room 317 City Hall, 350 S 5th St, Minneapolis. Open house at 12:30pm.
- 2) My office has hired Annie Welch for another summer as a public safety and community outreach intern. She will be working to help organize neighborhoods in the ward around issues of safety and livability, distributing this year's Welcome Packets, and helping with community events. I am looking into possibly hiring other interns as well.
- 3) The Council is considering an ordinance making it illegal to idle any gasoline vehicle for more than 3 minutes, or any truck more than 5 minutes. This builds on the anti-idling ordinance focusing solely on trucks that passed last year. I strongly support this ordinance. It is not necessary to idle modern cars for performance reasons, and idling significantly negatively impacts air quality. Additionally, a reduction in vehicle idling will help the City meet our sustainability goals regarding carbon emissions and air quality.
- 4) The Council has amended the City's Air Quality Ordinance to a) adopt the State's rules by reference, b) strengthen our regulation of commercial and industrial spray painting and c) include new regulations for all new coffee roasters. This last item responds to the overwhelmingly negative experience of the Seward neighborhood with a coffee roaster since 2005.
 - 5) The City Planning Commission (CPC) has approved Hubbard Broadcasting's application to subdivide the parking lot behind their property, on the condition that any potential development on the site will meet the requirements of the zoning code. The CPC has also approved a Conditional Use Permit to allow Debbie Allen, owner of Gopher Cleaners, to relocate her business on the ground floor of 2910 University Ave SE.
 - 6) The City has issued up to \$1,060,000 in bonds to refinance the acquisition, construction, and equipping of the University Episcopal Center Project, at 331 17th Ave SE.

- 7) Partly due to a request by my office, Representative Phyllis Kahn has introduced a bill, for consideration next year, to substantially improve the traffic laws with regards to bicycles. For cyclists, the proposal would make stop signs function like yield signs, and stop lights function like stop signs. I will be working within the City to support this on our legislative agenda. To see the bill, look here:
www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/revisor/pages/search_status/status_detail.php?b=House&f=HF4245&ssn=0&y=2008
- 8) Council Member Ostrow is proposing a mandatory registration process for protests in Minneapolis. I strongly oppose this idea. I do not believe we should put ourselves in the position (that St. Paul currently finds itself in) of telling protestors where and when they can express themselves. I do not believe that most protest groups will participate in a mandatory process, and I fear that lack of permits will become a pretext for unnecessary and counterproductive law enforcement actions during this summer's Republican National Convention. I plan to move a substitute resolution creating a purely voluntary registration process on **Wednesday, May 21**. With it, I will also be moving a resolution clarifying police procedures during the RNC this summer.
- 9) I voted against a Human Resources proposal to require pre-employment drug testing for all City employees when it came before the Executive Committee earlier this month. I am unconvinced that this sort of policy would serve any purpose other than intruding unnecessarily into the private lives of City employees. It is unclear whether this will pass when it comes before the full Council on June 6th.
- 10) At my urging, the City's Economic Development staff presented a report on the employment and poverty gaps between white and minority residents to the Health, Energy and Environment committee on May 5. Despite many efforts to address poverty and unemployment in Minneapolis, our best data reveal some striking and disturbing racial disparities. Roughly 11% of white people in Minneapolis live in poverty compared to 43% of all black people (including African immigrants), 43% of Asian Americans and nearly 35% of American Indians. Additionally, the unemployment rate for whites is just over 4%; for blacks it is just under 14%. I co-authored a resolution with Council Member Benson that outlined this problem and created a joint Minneapolis/Hennepin County Racial Disparities Steering Committee to help address it.
- 11) The No-Heat / Low-Heat ordinance I cosponsored with Ralph Remington has finally passed the Council. The new ordinance simplifies regulations about when landlords must keep rental units adequately warm by basing them on date rather than external temperature. Landlords must now provide an indoor temperature of at least 68 degrees between October 1 and May 1, and an indoor temperature of at least 65 degrees September 15 through October 1 and May 1 through May 15. We are also raising the fine amount for no heat and low heat offenses, and writing language that will allow City staff to cite landlords who repeatedly violate this ordinance without 'reasonable notice.'
- 12) In April I helped the mayor and other City leaders launch an effort to recruit City employees to mentor children in Minneapolis. Working with Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities (BBBS), we are seeking at least 50 City employees to volunteer as mentors for children in neighborhoods where kids have been waiting the longest for matches. Those 50 kids are just a small percentage of children throughout the city who are waiting to be matched with a mentor. BBBS, one of several non-profit organizations that work to provide young people with mentors, has a waiting list of more than 500 qualifying children under age 13 seeking mentors in Minneapolis. Some of those kids have been waiting for up to three years for a match. To join the effort to support our city's children, call BBBS at (651)789-2400 or visit <http://www.volunteermatch.org/orgs/org4931.html> to find out more about becoming a mentor. Please help spread the word to people you know who may be interested in mentoring.
- 13) Congratulations to the U of M Twin Cities campus, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, Minneapolis-based engineering firm Dunham and Thomas Ruffaner of Augsburg College for winning prizes in the 2007 Commuter Choice Awards.
- 14) My office put together a meeting of City staff and the leadership of the Green Institute to discuss the issues around lead paint in old reused building components, especially windows. This meeting has launched a longer-term collaboration between the City and the Institute, which has the promise of creating a pilot project for selling old parts of buildings in lead-safe ways.
- 15) As you may have heard, the Governor has vetoed the bill phasing out Bisphenol-A and certain phthalates that I sponsored a resolution supporting. I hope that the legislature takes up this important issue again next year.
- 16) There are openings on the Minneapolis Commission on Civil Rights (closes 5/30/08), Latino Advisory Committee to the Mayor and City Council (closes 5/30/2008), Minneapolis Workforce Council (PIWC) (closes 5/23/2008), and Minneapolis Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities (closes 5/30/08). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.