News from Cam Gordon Council Member, Second Ward August 2008

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/ward2/

2009 Budget. Mayor Rybak will present his proposed 2009 budget to the Council on **Thursday**, **August 14**. The Council will meet throughout September and October to review the budget and listen to presentations from each department. The 2009 budget will be adopted in December, after the Council holds a "truth and taxation hearing" on December 1 at 5 pm. This year I am hoping to see a smaller property tax increase (somewhere below the 8% increases we have seen for the past several years) and a focus on core services including public safety and basic public works. I will also be working to see that adequate resources go to youth violence prevention, addressing our housing crisis, investing in neighborhood-based initiatives and improving our infrastructure for bicyclists as well as autos. I look forward to learning and sharing more in the weeks ahead and I encourage you to share your budget priorities and concerns with me.

University District Rezoning Study. I am working to utilize the University District Partnership Alliance to help move forward on planning and zoning issues that have been raised in the University of MN Neighborhood Impact Report and elsewhere. I have gotten support from Planning staff and fellow Council members for the idea of doing a zoning study in the University District. My hope is that this study will help address several land use and development concerns including parking, housing and zoning code inspections and enforcement, density, and residential design standards. Haila Maze, Principal Planner with the CPED Planning Division and the East Sector Planner, will be leading the effort for the City. I am considering moving for a moratorium on new residential construction to help give us the time and space to complete this important work.

NRP. The NRP Framework for the Future work group gave its final report to the Committee of the Whole in July. We've made real progress towards ensuring a healthier future of our neighborhood organizations and a continued but different neighborhood revitalization program. The most significant recommendations in the report include the creation of a new residentcontrolled Neighborhood and Community Advisory Board, and a new Neighborhood and Community Relations Department under the City Coordinator. The report recommends that the City fund approximately 3 million dollars per year to neighborhood organizations to support administrative work. There is also an emerging consensus, made possible by the Legislature's decision to enable us to continue funding it into the future, that there will be additional discretionary funding for neighborhood priorities. You can read the full report here: http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2008-meetings/20080725/Docs/RCA-ProgramProposal.pdf. The Council will hold a special meeting on August 20, at 5pm, to take public comment on the report's recommendations for the future of NRP. You can submit written comments on the Framework until September 11, to Committee Clerk Anissa Hollingshead at anissa.hollingshead@ci.minneapolis.mn.us or by mail to Council Committee Clerk, 350 South 5th Street, Room 304, Minneapolis, MN 55415.

Fire Chief Alex Jackson. I was thrilled to support Alex Jackson, Mayor Rybak's nominee to lead the Minneapolis Fire Department, now our first African American Fire Chief.

Central Corridor. The Central Corridor Light Rail project's Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement has been completed. You can find more information about it here: http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/SuppDEISJul08.htm It provides details on the various changes that have been made to the plan over the past months including the new station location on the West Bank, the at-grade alignment and transit mall on Washington Ave. on campus and changes to how and where the line merges with the Hiawatha line downtown. The comment period ends August 25. Comments can be sent to Kathryn O'Brien at kathryn.obrien@metc.state.mn.us or Central Corridor LRT Project Office, 540 Fairview Avenue N., Ste. 200, St. Paul, MN 55104

Youth Violence. The Council has passed a resolution I authored creating a Youth Violence Prevention Plan Executive Committee and a Youth Violence Prevention Citizen Advisory Committee for oversight of the implementation stage of the Youth Violence Prevention Blueprint for Action. Additionally, this month the City of Minneapolis has issued a request for proposals for youth violence prevention services. Up to \$200,000 in federal funds will be available in grants of up to \$50,000 per year. The purpose of the funds is to develop programs to provide support, education and opportunities for skill-building to parents of teens. Eligible applicants are 501(c)(3) not-for-profit agencies or governmental agencies serving Minneapolis Empowerment Zone residents. Proposal requirements are detailed in the full Request for Proposals, (http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/procurement/EZRFP.pdf). Call 612-673-2301 fro more information or to have a copy mailed to you.

Police Policies for Protests. At the July 25th Council meeting, I succeeded in significantly strengthening the resolution laying out police policies for public assemblies. It is now clear that the City's policy is never to use conventional rubber bullets, that officers may not tamper with or destroy people's cameras, that officers will not target law-abiding protest observers, and that they won't subject protest organizers to disparate treatment. The vote to add these protections was unanimous. I am hopeful that by going on record laying out our expectations for the MPD, we will avoid the sort of escalating confrontations that have occurred in the past.

Neighborhood Student Liaison Pilot Project. The University Student and Community Relations Department has decided to initiate a new student ambassador program in the Como area this fall. I am very supportive of this effort and exciting that, after months of discussion and planning, it will kick off this fall. They plan to hire 18 -20 students this August and September to act as liaisons for 2 – 4 block areas to assist students living in the area, facilitate communications, help build positive community relations. To learn more and to apply for one of these exciting community organizer positions contact Kendra Turonie, Coordinator for Student Community Relations, 612 625-8939, turon001@umn.edu.

Sign up for Email Utility Bills. Save paper and money on postage by signing up to receive your utility bills online! Visit www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/forms/utility-billing, fill out the form on the back of your next billing stub and mail it in with your payment. If all Minneapolis utility customers signed up for electronic billing, each year the City would safe 44 tons of wood (equal to 302 trees) and enough energy to power seven homes. It's also a great way for us to make your tax dollars go further.

Native Plantings. Responding to a number of instances of "tall grass and weeds" violations being written for residents with native prairie gardens, we are working with Inspections staff to create a registration process and signage for purposeful native plantings.

Pentachlorophenol. My office is working with Seward residents who are concerned about a newly-installed utility pole containing pentachlorophenol, a chemical that is banned for most uses in the US (and all uses in some other industrialized countries) and is almost certainly a human carcinogen. The use of pentachlorophenal on utility poles is currently be reviewed by the EPA and we have gotten a commitment from Xcel not to install any new poles treated with this until the study is completed the September. They had planned to replace up to 800 poles this summer. I am working to develop a City position against the use of penta, either through a resolution, our legislative agenda, or our franchise agreement with Xcel which will expire in 2014.

Council Associates. Agreeing with AFSCME Local 9, I voted against a proposal to change Council Associates from civil service to appointed positions. I disagree with this proposal for a number of reasons, including concerns about completely politicizing this position, and the impact of this decision on the City employees currently doing this work. Most importantly, I simply do not believe that the Council can honestly make the findings that we are required to make in order to create new appointed positions. Only CM Colvin Roy joined me in voting against this.

Public Drinking Fountains. I am supportive of the decision to install 10 artist-designed drinking fountains throughout the City as part of our Art in Public Places Program. I believe that we must do more as a City to resist the commodification of water and defend its status as a "commons" – a right and responsibility we all share. My congratulations to fountain designers and local artists: Mayumi Amada; Lisa Elias; Douglas Freeman; Gita Ghei, Sara Hanson and Jan Louise Kusske; Seitu Jones; Andrew MacGuffie; Peter Morales; Marjorie Pitz. Better access to good drinking water for everyone and quality public art are two things we can do to make this a better city.

Park Dedication Fees. The Council has directed staff to develop a methodology for charging new housing and commercial/industrial developments a park dedication fee. I support this idea, which could help the Park Board better afford capital improvements.

Pre-Employment Drug Testing. Human Resources has brought the pre-employment drug testing policy back before the Council. It has left Executive Committee without recommendation and has been significantly limited from the original proposal that called for drug testing of all potential hires. Staff is now developing a policy requiring testing of potential employees who will handle cash or cash equivalents, have access to bank or investment accounts, or dispatch or respond to life-threatening emergencies.

Farm Stands. The execution of the new farm stand permit process that I worked so hard to create last year was, unfortunately, not very good. Applicants did not receive applications until very close to the time they wished to open, and completed applications were not turned around in a timely manner. My office, along with CM Johnson, had to intervene to get permits out without an even greater delay. I will be following up with staff to ensure that similar delays do not occur next year.

Parking Meter Contract. The City is pursuing a new contract for parking meters. One of the major goals of this change that I am supporting is to accept more methods of payment, including credit cards.

Organic Collection Contract. The Solid Waste and Recycling department has been authorized to negotiate with two different companies for our yard waste composting contract. I have heard that there are still significant obstacles to broadening these contracts to include collection of household organic waste, but I will continue to work towards this important goal.

Non-Motorized Transportation. Transit for Livable Communities has released the first list of funded 2008 Non-Motorized Transportation project. The 29th Ave S bike/walk street in Seward is not included, and is likely not to be funded by these grants. However, the pedestrian projects on the West Bank (including improvements to the intersection of Cedar and Riverside, Seven Corners, and the 5th Street sidewalk) are on a list of projects that TLC expressed interest in, but wanted to have more fleshed out before they would make a decision to fund them.

University Bike Trail. The City is pursuing legal agreements with MnDOT that will allow us to move forward with the University of MN bike trail, connecting the east end of Bridge 9 through the Dinkytown trench to Oak Street and the U of M Transitway. Our hope is to begin building this important project next April.

Hiawatha Bike Path Lighting. The City's Capital Long-Range Improvement Committee (CLIC) has recommended that the City not fund lighting the Hiawatha Corridor bike trail in 2013, which Public Works brought before them as part of a larger trail extension project. I strongly support this lighting project, which was voted the most important bike infrastructure improvement for 2013 by the City's Bicycle Advisory Committee, and will be working to get this back into the budget. I would be willing to put off the trail extension to a later year if that will make the lighting project easier to fund. I am also putting pressure on Met Transit to help pay for this important improvement, before 2013 if possible.

Bike Ambassador Kickoff. The City's new Bike Walk Ambassadors invite you to a Bike Walk Celebration on **Sunday, August 17th**, from 1-3pm at the park along Historic Saint Anthony Main Street. Meet the Bike Walk Ambassadors and Youth Ambassadors! See bikes for all ages, ability levels, and needs! Gather resources for walking as transportation and Safe Routes to Schools! Bring your family and friends and help launch our new effort to increase biking and walking in Minneapolis and its adjoining communities through education, outreach and encouragement.

Solar on the Convention Center. The Council has approved going forward with negotiations with EyeOn Energy on a 20-year power purchase agreement for renewable solar power generated on the roof of the Convention Center. This project is made possible by a \$2 million award from the Public Utilities Commission.

School Board Candidates' Issue Forum. Come meet this year's candidates for the Minneapolis School Board and find out what they have to say as they address to concerns of parents and families, **Thursday, August 21, 6:30pm** at Sabathani Community Center, 310 E 38th St.

Bohemian Flats Day. Please join me **Saturday, August 16**, at Bohemian Flats Day at Riverside Park. This is a celebration of the immigrant community that existed in Bohemian Flats in the early history of Minneapolis, and the Cedar Riverside neighborhood's broader history as a first stop for successive waves of immigrants to Minneapolis.

Cedar/Franklin/Minnehaha/20th. My office continues to work with Public Works to find a way to close the financing gap for the proposed project to disentangle the intersection of Minnehaha, Cedar, Franklin and 20th Ave S. A bonding request for \$860,000 in 2011 was also zeroed out by CLIC. The City did approve accepting a \$26,715 Hennepin County Environmental Response Fund Grant that will go to Seward Redesign to assist with the related Bystrom/Franklin Station project.

Hiawatha Station Extensions. Metro Transit plans to increase the size of many of the Hiawatha LRT stations to accommodate 3-car trains. This is great, because it makes clear that we have far exceeded our initial ridership projections. The construction project will begin next spring, and end in the spring of 2010. They are projecting three or four closures of the station during that period. I have asked that Metro Transit staff attend meetings in Seward and the West Bank to discuss the project, especially ideas for preventing conflict between pedestrians and cyclists in the station areas.

Historic Preservation in Prospect Park. Responding to the unanimous vote of the PPERRIA board, I am working with the City's Heritage Preservation staff to formally nominate the neighborhood for local historic designation, the step that triggers interim historic protections.

Oak Street Cinema/Opus Development. The Heritage Preservation Commission has voted to allow Opus development company to demolish the Oak Street Cinema for a large-scale student housing building. I will work to ensure that Opus delivers on the commitments they have made to the neighborhood, including their promise to build a multi-use art and film space on Oak Street.

Reconstruction and Resurfacing. The Council has completed the resurfacing project on 20th Ave S on the West Bank, and will begin the Malcolm Ave SE reconstruction project in Prospect Park later this summer.

Hiawatha Public Works Facility. The city's former concrete and asphalt plant, at 26th Street and Hiawatha Avenue in Phillips, will undergo a dramatic transformation later this year when ground is broken for a new facility. A public presentation explaining the sustainability components of the new buildings will be taking place at the August 14th East Phillips board meeting at 6:30 p.m. at

Holy Rosary Church, 1614 East 24th Street. When complete, the \$15 million Hiawatha Maintenance Facility will be the highest rated environmentally- friendly building ever built by a city in Minnesota. The building will house over 300 employees who build and maintain the city's sewers, bridges and streets. Two artists, including the Second Ward's (Seward's) own Brad Kaspari are also designing large-scale public art for the site.

Openings on Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Civilian Police Review Authority and Zoning Board of Adjustment (closes 09/30/08). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Please feel free to contact me and my office anytime if you have any questions or concerns. We welcome your thoughts and feedback on any of these issues and my positions.

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

Cam Gordon Minneapolis City Council Member, Second Ward 673-2202, 296-0579 http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/ward2/