

**News from Cam Gordon**  
**Council Member, Second Ward**  
**January 2009**

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

**February Roundtable Discussion.** Please join me to discuss priorities and challenges for 2009 on February 11, 6-8pm at Matthews Recreation Center. In this time of economic uncertainty, how can we work better together to keep making progress towards our shared goals? Come discuss your hopes and concerns for our city.

**Crime Down in Ward Two.** We've seen our second straight year of reductions in crime. Violent crime in Minneapolis was down 13 percent citywide in 2008 when compared to 2007 and down 24 percent compared to 2006. Homicides were down 22 percent from '07 and down 39 percent from '06. Robberies decreased 18 percent, aggravated assaults are down 8 percent, and juvenile crime dropped 17 percent in 2008. The Second Precinct, which covers the Southeast Como, Prospect Park and the University neighborhoods, led the city in violent crime reduction, falling 21 percent. Violent crime fell 12 percent in the First Precinct, which includes Cedar Riverside, and 11 percent in the Third Precinct, which includes the Cooper and Seward neighborhoods. It is worth noting that this data is only as good as our system of reporting and tracking. Just as we need to encourage our officers and dispatchers to follow up on calls and complete reports so that we have good data and can hold criminals accountable, we also need to encourage one another to call to 911 when crimes are in progress and 311 to report crimes. If you have had trouble reporting a crime, please let me know. It is also important to note that the overall reductions in crime citywide do not lessen the tragedy of any one act of violence, especially the three homicides that occurred on the West Bank this past year.

**2009 Budget Woes.** Shortly after we approved our 2009 City budget we learned that the Governor was "unalloting" \$13.1 million of the \$41 million Local Government Aid (or LGA) payment we were anticipating in December. In addition to the loss of LGA we are also being challenged by Minneapolis' closed pension obligations. For these old pension funds (that are no longer open to new retirees), losses due to stock market drops are expected to exceed \$38 million over the next 5 years. Unless the state is willing to reform its pension laws and merge these few older pensions into the larger state pension plan, the City must cover this loss. The state aid cuts, on top of the pension debt, mean that we will likely need to make significant changes to our budget in 2009. The Mayor has already asked City departments to submit plans for cutting from 10 to 20% of their approved 2009 budgets. City Intergovernmental Relations staff will also fight hard at the Legislature for the smallest possible LGA cuts and reform of the pension system. I urge you to contact your legislators and advocate for balancing the State budget without harming local government's ability to provide essential services.

**City Hiring Freeze.** To address the fiscal uncertainty of this upcoming year, the City has instituted a hiring freeze for all City positions. This will make staffing difficult, but I believe it is a prudent policy at this time.

**New Off-Street Parking Regulations.** In early January the City Council amended the City's standards for the number of off-street parking and loading spaces that must be provided when establishing or expanding land uses in Minneapolis. Parking requirements for residential uses outside of downtown will not change. The changes will reduce the financial burden on new small businesses, give the City the tools we need to prevent overly-large seas of parking, and help to discourage auto-oriented development in favor of more walkable, community-oriented commercial areas. It will also help reduce unnecessary work – over 90% of parking variances over the last four years have been granted. Some of the highlights include: reductions for most commercial uses to one space per 500 sq. ft. of floor area, while retaining a four-space minimum; elimination of minimum parking requirements in the downtown zoning districts; lower off-street parking requirements for non-entertainment food and beverage uses, the first ever establishment of bicycle parking for most uses; requirement that uses over 1,000 sq. ft. (an increase from 100 sq.

ft) must provide off-street parking; and limits on the amount of parking that can be provided for new development.

**Commercial Property Registration.** A majority of Council Members joined me in voting to send the proposed commercial property registration and inspection program back to staff for more work. I argued against moving this forward because I am not convinced that this is the right time to initiate this new program and think other approaches need to be studied. I was especially concerned that the funding plan placed an unfair and unwarranted burden on small and good businesses. Thanks to all the business owners and organizations who've communicated with me on this matter.

**Bike Sharing.** I strongly supported the Council's action to apply for up to \$1.75 million from the Non-Motorized Transportation Program to establish the first major bike-sharing system in the US. This system will cover Upton and Downtown and all of the University and West Bank neighborhoods and parts of Prospect Park, providing a great people-powered connection both to downtown and the University. I hope that Transit for Livable Communities will fund this exciting and innovative program, and that we can start getting it in place next year.

**Street Lighting Policy.** After years of effort, the Council voted to finalize our new street lighting policy. With the adoption of clear policies, the moratorium on new pedestrian scale lighting will end. The new rules clarify how residents, with City staff assistance, may petition for pedestrian lights. Working with Council Member Glidden and others, we were also able to amend the new policy to state that all new streetlights will be full-cutoff, unless the Council approves a variance. This will reduce glare, light pollution and energy usage. The policy also calls for use of Light Emitting Diodes when possible, a much more energy efficient lighting technology, which will both reduce the carbon emissions of city operations and save the City a significant amount of money. Street lighting represents roughly 40% of the City's electric bill.

**Youth Violence Prevention Executive Committee.** The Council has created a new Youth Violence Prevention Executive Committee to continue implementing our plan to reduce youth violence. I am honored to be serving on this committee with Mayor Rybak, MPS Superintendent Bill Green, School Board, Chair, Lydia Lee; Imam Sharif Mohamed; Ed Anderson; Darlene Bailey; Peter Benson; V.J. Smith; Gary Reiersen; Efreem Smith; Sondra Samuels; William Ziegler; Eloisa Echavez; Henn. Co. Commission Mark Stenglein; Richard Mammen; Frederick Huballa; Karen Kelley-Ariwoola, David Cress, and Police Chief Tim Dolan. I'm excited to keep our momentum going and look forward to be working with such an outstanding group.

**Planning for University District.** There will be a meeting on Wednesday January 14th at 7:00 at Van Cleve Park sponsored by the University District Partnership Alliance to discuss individual and general hopes the University area neighborhoods have for the District. The District includes Cedar Riverside, Prospect Park East River Road and Southeast Como. The goal is to develop a vision and set of graphics that can be shared among the existing partners and that can be communicated to potential partners including the state legislature.

**Alliance Reports.** The University District Partnership Alliance is working on our report back to the Legislature in February. This report will go before the Council's Intergovernmental Relations committee on February 3. Also, throughout January and February neighbors in the University District area will be reviewing a draft report of the Alliance's Zoning Planning and Regulatory Review Committee. This will form the basis for any changes we make in conjunction with the demolition and development moratorium put in place last August. All comments are welcome. For more see [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/University\\_District\\_ZPRR\\_public.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/University_District_ZPRR_public.asp)

**University District – Home Buyer Incentive Program.** Starting this month we are launching this new program that provides down payment or closing cost assistance through \$10,000 two-percent interest loans that requires no monthly payment and are forgivable over five years. All area realtors are invited to a meeting about this on January 16, 1-3 pm at Van Cleve Park. The

program offers loans to new buyers in the Cedar Riverside, Southeast Como and Prospect neighborhoods. For more information contact the Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation Housing Resource Center, at 612-378-7985 or visit [http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/prod/groups/ohr/@pub/@ohr/@relocation/documents/asset/ohr\\_asset\\_069659.pdf](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/prod/groups/ohr/@pub/@ohr/@relocation/documents/asset/ohr_asset_069659.pdf)

**Hennepin / First Two Way.** On January 9th, the Council voted to turn both Hennepin and First Avenue in downtown from one-ways to two-ways. This is an exciting step, but offers some challenges for keeping good bicycle infrastructure through downtown. Staff's recommended layout includes some innovative bike lanes on First, as well as a shared bus/bike/right turn lane on Hennepin (which I expect to be useful to experienced riders, but not newer riders).

Unfortunately, the current layouts don't make good connections between the planned bike lanes on Hennepin and these new lanes on First. To solve this problem, my staff worked with Council Members Lilligren and Goodman to pass a motion directing staff to come back by mid-February to present their plan for getting less experienced cyclists from First to Hennepin and vice versa, including cost information on a one-block dual-flow bike facility on 12<sup>th</sup> Street N. I'm hopeful that the end result will be one seamless bike facility through downtown that will be safe and welcoming to all riders.

**Diversity on Police Force.** The Minneapolis Police Department is now more diverse than it has ever been. Of the 891 current officers, 165 (or 18.59%) are people of color. We are at our highest levels ever for Hispanic, African American and Asian officers. While we certainly have further to go, I consider this a significant step towards making our police force resemble the people they serve, which has been a priority of mine for some time.

**Outside Audit of Police Internal Affairs.** In 2006 the Civilian Review Authority work group I helped establish issued several recommendations that were approved by City Council. One called for an external audit of the MPD Internal Affairs Unit. In 2008 the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) was awarded the contract to conduct the audit. It is now complete and offers several recommendations that might improve our complaint investigation process and better inform and educate the community. The report will come before Public Safety and regulatory Services committee on January 14.

**Building Blocks Awards.** Please nominate a block club for the 2009 Building Blocks Award. All block clubs that did not win this award in 2007 are eligible to apply. Nominations must be received by Friday, January 23, to [ccpsafe@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:ccpsafe@ci.minneapolis.mn.us). Each honored block club will receive recognition at a public ceremony, Building Blocks Award signs to post on the block, a \$100 gift card, and an award of appreciation for the block club.

**2008 Teresa S. Ruhland Youth Award.** The Minneapolis Police Department annually recognizes a Minneapolis resident who is a non-paid volunteer doing an outstanding job of getting youth involved in the community. Consider nominating yourself or someone you know. Nominations are due Friday, February 6, 2009. For more information and to make a nomination contract [ccpsafe@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:ccpsafe@ci.minneapolis.mn.us)

**Block Leader Training.** The Police Department is hosting a Block Leader Training on **Thursday, January 15, 6:30–8:30pm** at the Third Precinct, 3000 Minnehaha Ave. Join other leaders throughout the city to develop skills for effectively working with your neighbors as a block club. If you plan to attend, you must RSVP at 673-2856.

**Newspaper Box Ordinance.** I supported Council Member Remington's ordinance regulating outdoor newspaper boxes. I share his concerns about the poor upkeep of these boxes, and especially about the fact that in many locations, sidewalks are cluttered to the extent that they do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**Functional Yield.** Despite the recommendation of the City's Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Intergovernmental Relations committee voted to oppose the "Functional Yield" bill introduced by Phyllis Kahn last year. Fortunately, the Council overturned that recommendation at its first meeting in 2009, opting instead to take no position on this bill. I am disappointed that the Council was unable to support this, but at least we remained neutral on the question and have started the discussion about how to make our traffic regulations less centered on motor-vehicles.

**Powerline Resolution.** On January 9 the Council referred the resolution on the proposed new South Minneapolis Xcel substations and power line that I coauthored to the Health Energy and Environment committee. It calls on Xcel Energy to do more study about the need for the substations and, if still needed, bury the proposed high-voltage power line under 28<sup>th</sup> Street East from Hiawatha to I-35W, rather than implementing any overhead option or putting the line down the Midtown Greenway. I expect a Public Hearing on this issue to be held by this committee at 1:30 pm on January 26.

**Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC).** On Thursday, January 22, 10:00 a.m., in City Hall - Room 317 there will be a public hearing for the appointments to the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (NCEC). This will be an opportunity for the eight finalists to introduce themselves and for the public to comment. The City Council will then make the final appointments on February 6. The Park Board will also appoint a member and 8 additional members will be selected by neighborhood organizations in a process that is yet to be determined. While I was disappointed that none of the outstanding applicants from the second ward have been brought forward as finalists, I am very pleased that there is such great interest in, and so many qualified applicants for, this important commission. The candidates that have been forwarded to the Committee of the Whole for consideration are Tony Anactasia from Audubon Park, David Crockett from Stevens Square/Loring Heights, Crystal Johnson from Near North, Ed Newman from Loring Park, Doris Overly from Standish, Matt Perry from East Harriet/Farmstad, Breanne Rothstrien from Windom and Jeffrey Strand, current NRP Policy Board Member from Shingle Creek. For more about the Commission visit <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/communityengagement.asp> To see more information about the eight finalist candidates you can view the linked document at [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2009-meetings/20090123/docs/NCEC\\_FinalistCandidates.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2009-meetings/20090123/docs/NCEC_FinalistCandidates.pdf)

**New Neighborhood and Community Relations Department Project Manager.** This month David Rubedor began working as senior project manager for the City's newly created Neighborhood and Community Relations Department. Rubedor has more than 10 years of experience as executive director of area nonprofit organizations, is past executive director of the Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association, and served as a volunteer on the City's Community Engagement Task Force last year. For more see [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/WhatsNews\\_CE.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/WhatsNews_CE.asp)

**Great Streets 2009.** The City is seeking proposals for activities that strengthen the economic vitality of neighborhood business districts. Eligible areas include commercial corridors, nodes, activity centers and LRT station areas. (For a full list of eligible locations please see: [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/docs/Great\\_Streets\\_Eligible\\_Areas.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/docs/Great_Streets_Eligible_Areas.pdf) )The total funding available in 2009 is \$500,000. The target contract amount is \$5,000 to \$50,000. The Request for Proposals and more information are available at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/rfp.asp> **Proposals are due February 27, 2009 by 4:30 p.m.** Questions can be directed to Kelly Hoffman at [kelly.hoffman@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:kelly.hoffman@ci.minneapolis.mn.us) or 612-673-5079.

**Voting Rights for Ex-Offenders.** My office has been working with TakeAction Minnesota to kick off the campaign to restore voting rights for ex-offenders. The goal of this campaign is to change State law and join thirteen other states that allow ex-felons to vote after they leave prison, rather than having to wait until they are finished with parole.

**Congratulations to SECIA.** The Southeast Como Improvement Association recently learned that they will be given a Governor's Award for Pollution Prevention. This comes from their partnering with local industry to limit pollution and reach Good Neighbor Agreements with Greatbatch Globe Tool, Ritrama, Inc, and Rock-Tenn Company. The award will be formally presented on Wednesday February 11 at the Air Water & Waste Conference at Rivercentre in St. Paul.

**Dania Hall Site.** The first in a series of City-facilitated meetings regarding the future of the City owned Dania Hall Site in the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood will be held January 27th, 7:00pm to 8:30pm at Cedar Apartments Community Room at 630 Cedar Ave. Come learn about the steps needed for redevelopment to occur. Give input on community needs and goals of redevelopment, and discuss a timeline for possible sale and redevelopment.

**\$75,000 for Somali Youth Violence Prevention.** The final 2009 budget includes \$75,000 for preventing Somali youth from joining gangs and participating in violent acts. I will work to ensure that the West Bank neighborhood is a major focus of this effort.

**Seward Coop Grand Opening.** I was thrilled to attend the grand opening of the new Seward Coop on January 8th. This great new neighborhood amenity is the result of a lot of hard work done by the Coop's board and staff, Seward Redesign, the Seward Neighborhood Group and many others. This building dramatically increasing the services the Coop will be able to provide to the neighborhood and is also expected to be LEED Gold certified, making it one of the most ecologically sustainable grocery stores in the region. It is green in more ways than one. I'm also glad that the old Seward Coop building is slated to house a new Asian restaurant, keeping activity on Franklin. Thanks to the Coop for this investment, and to so many residents, Coop Employees and City staff for putting in the time and effort to ensure that this was the best project possible. As Dan Nordley put it in his excellent comments at the opening, "cooperation works."

**Historic Resource Survey in Seward and Longfellow.** City staff has scheduled some community meetings for the Historic Resource Survey in the Seward and Longfellow. The first meeting is **February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 6-7:30pm** at Matthews Park. The second will be on **March 24<sup>th</sup>, 6-7:30pm**, at Becketwood Chapel, 4300 W River Pkwy.

**Arrest in Seward Kidnapping.** Three Seward residents were arrested for kidnapping and robbing a couple on New Year's Eve in Seward. These individuals have a long history of criminal activity in the area and I am hopeful that, if the good work of the Police leads to convictions, we can use community impact statements to assist the judge in determining an appropriate significant sentence and that these arrests will help reduce crime in the Seward neighborhood.

**Charges in Cedar Riverside Homocide.** Charges have been filed in the September 2008 shooting death of Ahmanur Ahmed Ali near 420 15<sup>th</sup> Av S. A 17 year-old has been charged with murder in the second degree (intentional). Minneapolis detectives Holthusen and Granger put together the case working closely with community members to develop suspect information through eyewitness accounts. Thanks to everyone who helped. The 17 year-old has been certified as adult for purposes of the trial and is currently in custody.

**Charlotte Commons Open House.** Project for Pride in Living and Cabrini Partnership will celebrate the completion of Phase I of the Van Cleve Development at 1201 Brook Avenue SE, in SE Minneapolis on January 15, 5 pm – 8 pm. Everyone is invited for light refreshments, to meet the funders, developers, service providers, architect, and contractors involved in the project, and to see a unit and talk with residents.

**Wireless in Southeast.** I have heard numerous concerns from Prospect Park and Southeast Como residents about the slow pace of wireless internet installation in Southeast. I share folks' frustrations, having been told by City staff that the necessary poles would be installed by this fall. The current timeline shows completion coming in the winter of 2009. I have asked staff and

US Internet employees to work with my office to attend a public meeting in Prospect Park to discuss the timeline for installation and hear the community's concerns. I am glad to organize for a meeting in Como as well.

**Renaming of Street.** I've received requests from some Prospect Park residents that the City change the name of a street in the Glendale area to honor Dorothy Whitaker, a long-term resident and activist who recently passed away. I am helping folks navigate the City's process for this name change.

**Sydney Hall / Dinkydome.** The Sydney Hall / Dinkydome development has received the approval of the Planning Commission and City Council for modifications to the developer's original plan, including moving the east wall of the building further from the lot line and adding some height.

**Washington Ave Ramps.** The Central Corridor Project Office and City staff continue to explore modifications to the ramp configurations at Washington and Cedar Avenues on the West Bank as part of the Central Corridor LRT planning. At the most recent neighborhood meeting, my office asked the Project Office to explore consolidating all turning motions onto and off of Washington on the east side of Cedar Avenue, to free up additional space for development.

**Input Needed on Bystrom/Franklin Station Area Redevelopment.** Changes have been proposed for the Franklin Station Redevelopment plan that would designate 14 properties located near the intersection of East 22<sup>nd</sup> Street and Minnehaha Avenue as property that "May Be Acquired" by the City to assist with the redevelopment. Seward Redesign has been working on this project for several months and has been awarded significant public funds for this from the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and Hennepin County. The funding is intended to facilitate redevelopment of the property to new higher-density, mixed-income, transit-oriented and sustainable development that includes affordable and market-rate housing units. The draft, [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/mod2franklin\\_mod113LRT.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/mod2franklin_mod113LRT.asp), is available for public review until February 23, 2009. Please submit comments to Mark Garner, Senior Project Coordinator, at 612-673-5037. If you or your group would like learn more, please do not hesitate to contact me or Mark.

**1721 Como Ave SE.** Hennepin County's public hearing on the application to repurchase the tax forfeited 1721 Como Ave SE has been continued until January 12<sup>th</sup>. At the hearing, my office and Licensing staff presented the City's case for denying the repurchase based on the history of unresolved code violations and unpaid citations. At County staff's request, I successfully moved a resolution formally declaring that the City considers 1721 Como a "municipal problem" under the previous owner's ownership. It is my hope that this will strengthen the case for denying the repurchase application, so that this property can be put to better use.

**Openings on City Boards and Commissions.** There are openings on the Latino Advisory Committee (2/27) and the Minneapolis Telecommunications Network (1/16). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

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