

News from Cam Gordon

Council Member, Second Ward

June/July 2011

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

Commercial Recycling Ordinance Passes. The commercial recycling ordinance I have been working on for over a year unanimously passed the Council this month. I was very pleased that groups as diverse as the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce and the Sierra Club supported the new ordinance. The ordinance will go into effect September 1, 2011. I will now work with staff from Solid Waste and Recycling, Sustainability and Regulatory Services to develop an implementation plan, including technical assistance for businesses that do not currently recycle and educational materials. My intention is to encourage staff to be patient and supportive as we work to see that every property owner is successfully able to comply with the new ordinance. I see this as a major step forward for waste reduction and greening our city, and think that it helps set a baseline expectation that recycling is not new and not difficult, but simply the way that we deal with waste in Minneapolis.

Street Work in Ward 2. This summer is a very busy time for street work in the Second Ward. In addition to the ongoing work on the Central Corridor project (more information available here: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/transportation/ccorridor/centralcorridor.asp>), there are a host of projects from small and short-term to very large and with a much longer impact. Riverside Avenue has closed to through traffic from Franklin to 25th Ave S, and from 23rd to 24th Aves S. My office has worked with Fairview Hospital and Public Works staff to address some concerns that the hospital had about signage and ambulance access. The S-curve on 26th and 25th Aves S between Franklin and 9th St S has been resurfaced. The lane striping is currently temporary tabs, to allow Public Works staff and the neighborhood to continue conversations about reducing the two-lane configuration to a single lane in each direction with bike lanes. Resurfacing on 10th Ave SE (from the 10th Ave bridge to 4th St SE) began on July 11 and should take about 1 week. Resurfacing on 19th Ave S (from Washington Ave to 1st St S) and Washington Ave (from 19th Ave S to Cedar Ave) will begin on the week of July 18 and should take about 1 week. The work on both streets will occur without street closures, but it will be very congested in these areas. Franklin Avenue is being resurfaced, and bike lanes are being added. During this challenging summer, please be patient and careful, and please continue to patronize area businesses.

National Night Out is Tuesday, August 2nd. If you're planning a neighborhood gathering, there are important deadlines for registering your event with the City and for blocking off your street. The theme for 2011 NNO is "Back to Basics: Neighbors Getting to Know Neighbors!" There is a single online process to register your NNO event and apply to close your street. If you want to close your street for your event, street closure is free if you apply by Tuesday, July 19. From July 20 to July 28, there is a \$100 fee for blocking off the street. You need permission of 75 percent of your neighbors to be approved for street closure—please have their names and addresses with you when you apply. (You do not need their signatures.) Get started at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/nno. You can also register your event and apply for street closure by calling 311 (or 612-673-3000). For ideas for greening your NNO event, visit www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/nno/Green-Block-Party.pdf.

State Government Shutdown. The shutdown of state government that started on July 1 is having significant impacts on the City of Minneapolis. Before the shutdown, Public Works crews had to scramble to finish projects that are funded by the state, or by federal funds that have passed through the state, before the first, to avoid disruptions. The Council has authorized legal action to require the State of Minnesota to make Local Government Aid (LGA) payments during the shutdown. The City has taken on some functions normally provided by the state, including electrical inspections. The longer the shutdown continues, the greater the possibility for impact on the City of Minneapolis. More information is available here:

www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2011-meetings/20110722/Docs/2011StateGovernmentShutdownReport_final_draft.pdf.

Elections Department. In June, the Council voted not to explore contracting with Hennepin County for elections services. The vote followed a report provided by a consultant, hired in May to study consolidation of all or a part of the City's elections responsibilities with Hennepin County. The consultant was also asked to look at process improvements, potential cost savings, and other operational enhancements. The consultant, Connie Schmidt, identified little to no cost savings with consolidation and did not recommend a merger. In her report (available here <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/elections/ejbulletin.asp>) she carefully outlined the different election functions the City and County do and suggested several ways for the city to save costs including eliminating 12 to 14 precincts. Schmidt commended the election division for its work on the Senate recount of 2008, the implementation of Rank Choice Voting in 2009; and the gubernatorial recount of 2010. The report identifies an immediate need to purchase RCV-capable voting equipment and states that, "The City election staff, in partnership with the Secretary of State, Hennepin County and other counties in the State of Minnesota, should join arms to work cooperatively to develop required RFP specifications. There can be significant cost savings to all jurisdictions (cities and counties) through a joint effort to purchase new equipment."

In my role as Elections Committee Chair, I am working to convene a discussion between City and County Elections staff, appropriate elected officials, and Ranked Choice Voting experts on this voting equipment issue. The report also recommends that the City election office continue to build on their renewed partnership with the County election office, conduct a Business Process Analysis to determine whether the division is operating efficiently and identify ways in which operations could be improved; consider relocating offices to share space with the clerks office and develop a strategic plan for the next 3 to 5 years. The vote by the Council will allow us to move ahead filling the position of Election Director that (although filled by two different interim directors) has remained vacant since mid-2009.

Development Plans Now Online. The City has started providing more online information about proposed development projects in Minneapolis. The public now has easier access to development plans for any project that has submitted a site plan review application for City Planning Commission review (generally, this is required for new non-residential or mixed use buildings and developments with five or more new residential units). Links to development plans are available directly from online Commission agendas, which you can find here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/agendas/planning-commission/>. The inclusion of development plans should make it easier to access to information about planning and development-related activities and projects. These projects will be in the review process and will therefore be subject to revision based on City Planning Commission decisions and/or other factors that affect proposed new developments. Agendas (and the related staff reports and plans) will typically be available online Wednesdays prior to City Planning Commission meetings.

Draft Red Rock Corridor Report Released. The Red Rock Corridor Commission, on which I serve as the Minneapolis City representative, just released the Station Area Planning Report for public review. The report is the result of an 18-month study that included an extensive public participation and community outreach process to plan for the areas around proposed Red Rock Corridor station stops in St. Paul on Lower Afton Road, Newport, Cottage Grove and Hastings. Red Rock will be the Twin Cities' second commuter rail line. Before it can be completed, the commission will be building ridership with commuter coach buses. The proposed line would run from downtown Minneapolis, though St. Paul to Hastings, with a second phase proposed to go to Red Wing in the future. Construction of the line is tentatively set for 2016, with service starting in 2019. The draft plans identify station locations and include convenient access for bicyclists, pedestrians and feeder buses to the station areas, as well as enough parking to accommodate 2,000 potential commuters. Over the summer months people will have an opportunity to review the findings of the Report and approve their community's station area plan. A copy of the Station Area Planning Report is available online at http://redrockrail.org/pdf/final-report-2011/INTRO_7-7-11.pdf. For more information on the Red Rock Corridor, visit www.redrockrail.org

Grants available for Water Quality Projects. The Mississippi Watershed Management Organization (MWMO) is providing Stewardship Fund grants to help improve water quality or improve water and natural resource management and build community understanding, knowledge, and initiative related to water and natural resource issues and solutions. \$250,000 is available through three types of grants: Mini Grants up to \$2,000 – February 1, June 1, and October 1 cycles each year; Planning Grants up to \$10,000 – February 1 annual cycle; Action Grants up to \$50,000 – October 1 annual cycle. Nonprofit organizations, officially recognized neighborhood groups, schools, local units of government, and business and professional associations are eligible to apply. Individuals, home owners associations and condominium associations, and private businesses may partner with eligible applicants in order to apply. Information sessions will be held August 25, Noon-1 pm - or - Tuesday, August 30, 4-5 pm. For more information visit www.mwmo.org/stewardshipfund.html or contact Erica Sniegowski, Education and Outreach Specialist, at esniegowski@mwmo.org, or (612) 465-8780, ext. 206

Minneapolis-Hennepin Recycling and Drop-off Center. I joined the rest of my colleagues on the Zoning and Planning committee in unanimously voting against the appeal of the Zoning Administrator's finding that the proposed Minneapolis-Hennepin Recycling and Drop-off Center is a recycling center, not a waste transfer station. While I am sympathetic to many of the concerns of the affected neighbors, there are a few reasons that I voted against the appeal. The most important is that the Zoning Administrator's findings are **proscriptive**, meaning that the proposed facility will **have** to conform to the definition of a recycling facility into the future. I will continue to pay close attention to this project as it moves forward. Many of the legitimate concerns brought up by the appellants – including traffic, screening, noise and more – will be more effectively addressed by the Conditional Use Permit process that this project must still undergo.

Household hazardous waste collection event. Hennepin County has scheduled a short-term event to collect household hazardous waste from **July 21-23**, 9am to 4pm, at Dunwoody College of Technology, 818 Dunwoody Blvd. For more information, including a complete list of acceptable and non-acceptable items and directions to the temporary drop-off site, call Hennepin County Environmental Services at (612) 348-3777 or go to www.hennepin.us/collectionevents.

Backyard Composting Workshop. Composting is not just a sustainable way of handling biodegradable waste. It's also a great way to put nutrients back into the soil of your garden. Learn the basics of composting at an upcoming backyard composting basics workshop on **Saturday, July 16**, at 1pm at the Midtown Global Market, 920 E Lake St, Minneapolis. The cost is \$10 for the public and \$8 for *Do it Green!* members.

City Staff Departures. Three City leaders are departing their positions with the City this summer. Details follow:

Susan Young is leaving her position of Solid Waste and Recycling Director in July. I have greatly appreciated Susan as a knowledgeable, can-do City employee, and have worked with her on several projects, most recently the commercial recycling ordinance. She has been a strong leader and has consistently gained praise for her competence running highly regarded and successful trash removal, recycling and graffiti clean up programs. Susan will be leaving at a time when the leadership of solid waste and recycling will be faced with some great policy questions like: how do we expand curbside organics collection citywide? Should we transition from our current multi-sort recycling program to a dual-sort system? I wish Susan well, and look forward to working on these complicated topics with her successor.

Rocco Forte has left his position as Director of Regulatory Services and Emergency Preparedness. Prior to that Rocco also served as Minneapolis Fire Chief from 1998-2004. Minneapolis is recognized today as a national leader in emergency response in large part because of Rocco's thoughtful, professional management skills. His leadership in response to the I-35W bridge collapse was particularly remarkable. Now that Rocco is leaving the City, the

intention is to move Emergency Management to back to the City Coordinator department. I have greatly appreciated working with Rocco and the team he developed in regulatory services and saw enormous and measurable improvement in that department over the years he was Director.

Bass Zanjani left his position as Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator in early July to take a new position as Deputy District Director in Congressman Keith Ellison's office. Bass helped us make great progress implementing our youth violence prevention. His passion and strategic skills related to the issue will be greatly missed.

Loans Available for Foreclosure Prevention. Homeowners facing hardships like unemployment, underemployment or a medical problem that's putting them at risk of foreclosure can enter a lottery for a special, zero-interest loan from the Emergency Homeowners Loan Program (ELHP). The deadline for applying is **July 22**. The eligibility requirements are strict. To find out what they are and to apply, go to <http://ehlpminnesota.com/> or call 1-866-462-6466. The City can also help anyone at risk of foreclosure in Minneapolis. To take advantage of this, call 311.

Federal Cuts to the Community Development Block Grant (CDGB) program have forced the City to adjust allocations it approved as part of the 2011 budget. I voted against a proposal that passed out of one Committee because of what I saw as disproportionate cuts to Public Health grants that provide critical services to residents of Minneapolis, including one for \$75,000 to the Living at Home/Block Nurse program that supports the good work of the Southeast Seniors program. This, along with teen pregnancy and youth violence prevention programs were cut 60% while other Public Service CDGB-funded projects were not cut at all. At the Council Meeting on June 17th I attempted to amend this proposal to reinstate some of the funding cut to the Public Health grants by spreading the cuts across more programs but my amendment failed. I subsequently voted against the proposal that was passed by a majority of the Council.

Capital Budget Requests. The City has finalized a list of capital investment projects that we will submit as bonding requests to the legislature in 2012. Two projects in the Second Ward are on the list: Granary Road, and the 10th Avenue Bridge. A citywide project, the Grand Rounds lighting renovation, may have an impact on West and East River Parkways. Other projects on the City's list of requests are the Plymouth Ave Bridge, improvements to the Target Center, planning funds for Nicollet Mall, and storm tunnel projects for I-35W.

Fine Increase. The City Council has voted to increase the fine for occupying a rental unit after the license has been revoked from \$500 to \$2,000.

Dominic Felder. After losing a court decision the City Council voted to follow the court's decision and pay nearly \$2.2 million in a settlement with the family of Dominic Felder, an African-American man who was killed by a Minneapolis Police Officer in 2006. The \$2.19 million award is the second largest paid by the city for police misconduct that I am aware of. Last year a jury awarded the Felder family \$ 1.8 million. In January the Council voted to appeal that decision. We lost the appeal and Judge David Doty added \$380,000 to cover the family's legal fees.

Youth Violence Prevention Grants. The City has applied for a US Department of Health and Human Services five year grant of over a million dollars to plan and implement evidence-based strategies to reduce youth violence, building on the work of the Blueprint for Action.

Hennepin Avenue Cultural Corridor Grant. The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded a \$200,000 "Our Town" grant to the Hennepin Theatre Trust to begin a process of "re-inventing" Hennepin Avenue as an arts-inspired cultural corridor stretching from the Walker Art Center and Minneapolis Sculpture Garden to the Mississippi Riverfront. Hennepin Theatre Trust, is the independent, non-profit owner of the State, Orpheum, Pantages and New Century Theatres. Their plan is to create a "Hennepin Avenue Cultural Corridor" that will better connect and coordinate the Mississippi Riverfront, Minneapolis Public Library, Cowles Center for Performing

Arts, the State, Orpheum and Pantages Theatres and the Walker Art Center and Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

Outside Areas Ordinance. Last month the Council considered a new ordinance related to the regulation of outdoor dining areas. While I understand the concerns of residents who live near bars and restaurants with patio spaces, I did not think that this ordinance was a necessary, fair, or effective way to address those concerns. We already have ordinances related to noise and outdoor areas that could be used to address these concerns. Also, as it was written it would have had one set of regulations for downtown, and a more stringent set of regulations in the rest of the city. I fear that this will leave Second Ward businesses at an unfair disadvantage. At the Council meeting on June 17th the author of the ordinance amendment, Meg Tuthill, moved to postpone it for five weeks to allow time for her to form a task force explore alternatives. While I had planned to vote against the ordinance if it was moved forward, I supported the postponement and will be interested to see what the task force brings forward. In the meantime I continue to encourage city staff to better enforce current rules and local business owners to work with residents to address noise and other complaints related to their business operations.

New City Domain Name. The City of Minneapolis is transitioning to a new, shorter, easier domain name and Internet address in mid-July: www.minneapolismn.gov. The new formula for e-mail addresses will be: First.Last@minneapolismn.gov. The current domain (ci.minneapolis.mn.us) and e-mail addresses will still be valid.

2011 Sustainability Report. In July the City released its annual Sustainability Report, Minneapolis, *Living Well*. The report tracks 26 sustainability indicators and highlights trends and activity related to them. I can be found at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability. Once again, fewer children had elevated levels of lead this year, the number of HIV cases was at its lowest level since 2005, and the number of gonorrhea cases was at the lowest level in a decade. Other positive news includes increases in transit and bike ridership as well as renewable energy installations and the building and updating of affordable housing. Unfortunately we also saw continued health, crime and income disparities among populations based on race and a decline in recycling and composting rates. Although violent crime has decreased nearly 27% over the past 4 years, some violent crimes, including homicides and rapes saw increases between 2009 and 2010.

Forgivable Loans for Central Corridor Businesses. Minneapolis businesses along the Central Corridor route could begin applying for assistance in June 27 to help keep their operations up and running during the construction phase of the light rail line. The loan program offers a total of \$4 million in forgivable loans, giving qualified small retail businesses up to \$20,000 each. Loans to eligible businesses will be interest-free and forgiven in equal installments over five years if the business can certify that it is operating on the Central Corridor each year. Funds may be used for working capital and current business expenses. For more information and to download an application see http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/business/cclrt_loan_program.asp. Once completed, applications can be dropped off at Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers, 3137 Chicago Ave. For more information, contact MCCD at 789-8448.

New U Steam Plant Proposal. Following up on its recently released Twin Cities Campus Climate Action Plan that calls on the campus to reduce its carbon footprint by half by the year 2020, The University of Minnesota is proposing to build a new natural gas combined heat and power facility at the "Old Main" site just west of the Dinkytown Bikeway Bridge and the Education Sciences Building. The Old Main steam plant was decommissioned a few years ago, but the facility remains, at the hub of the steam distribution system for the campus. Two natural gas fueled turbines would be installed to generate steam and electricity. If the project goes forward, there will be a multi-year implementation period, and there will be a State pollution control permitting process. Additionally, funding for the facility would need to be part of the U's 2012 capital request to the legislature. The Board of Regents Facilities Committee approved the request on July 6 and it will now go to the full Board in November. The Regents' meeting agendas are online at

www1.umn.edu/regents/meetings.html. This summer the University will host informational meetings on the proposal. For more Information contact Jan Morlock, Community Relations, 612-624-8318 or Mike Berthelson, Facilities Management 612-626-1091.

Riverside Plaza Renovation Meeting. In July I helped convene a community meeting focused on the Riverside Plaza renovation workforce goals. City staff, representatives from the workforce training program Emerge, and the general contractor for the project, Knutson, were present along with the developer, George Sherman, to report on progress and answer questions. All reports indicate that the project is on track to meet the workforce goals as outlined in the Development Agreement's Memorandum of Understanding ([www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/docs/Project Enhancements MOU 101220Final.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cped/docs/Project_Enhancements_MOU_101220Final.pdf)), although there are still job opportunities for skilled workers, youth and others. The well attended meeting also provided the chance to hear and discuss other concerns, including some about unhealthy, dusty conditions during construction, elevator troubles and other inconveniences. The most critical concern, however, related to creation of a new safety center as stipulated in the MOU. Many people expressed concerns about the safety center possibly displacing a valued youth program operated by the Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota. I share this concern and believe that it is essential that we do not allow the new safety center to force out any other community serving programs or services including the youth center, the East African Woman's Center, and charter school. I am hopeful that the Plaza tenants association, the confederation and the landlord can work together to find adequate space for the new safety center and all existing programs that wish to continue operating in the Plaza. For more about the meeting see <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/news/2011/07/08/confrontation-cedar-riverside-over-planned-safety-center>.

Shooting on the West Bank. On June 25th, two 25-year-old St. Paul residents, both African American, were shot on the 300 block of Cedar Avenue on the West Bank. My office has heard from the Police Department that the victims are uncooperative, and that investigators are therefore not optimistic about the chances of catching the shooter.

Applying for Funding for West Bank Projects. The City is applying to the Met Council's Livable Communities Demonstration Account program for two projects on the West Bank. We are requesting over \$1 million in development funding for the Currie Park Lofts project on 15th Ave S, between the Hiawatha LRT line and 4th St S, and \$100,000 for a study of right-of-way parcels that could be made developable once the Central Corridor project is complete.

Nice Ride Expansion. Three new Nice Ride bicycle sharing kiosks have come online in the Second Ward. In Prospect Park, one has been installed at Yale and 27th Ave SE, the other on University and 29th Ave SE. In Longfellow, a station has been installed at the corner of 39th Ave S and Lake Street. I welcome this expansion, which will make it easier for residents and visitors to get to around in Minneapolis – and now even get to St. Paul.

Seward Market Community Mural. There will be an open house Wednesday July 13, 5:00-8:30pm at Seward Market 2619 East Franklin Avenue to celebrate a new community mural in the area. Attendees will see a slideshow of photos, rough drafts, initial sketches of the painting design and more. Community painting days include July 13, 5:00-8:30 p.m.; July 16, 3:00-7:00 p.m.; and July 20, 5:00-8:30 p.m. Photo panels for the mural will be installed the last week of July. The mural is part of a larger community response to the January 2010 tragic fatal shooting at Seward Market. The mural's coordinating entity, ArtiCulture, hopes memorialize the three people who died and celebrate our diverse community. For more information please go to <http://articulture.org/mural-project>.

Alley Resurfacing in Seward. The alley between 30th Ave S and 31st Ave S, from 26th to 25th Streets, will be resurfaced this year. The assessment rate for affected properties is \$.065 per square foot. Assessments of more than \$150 may be paid off over five years, through a property tax assessment.

U of M Gopher Stadium Events. This month traffic and sounds related to the U of M's football stadium will likely impact some Ward 2 residents. On Saturday, July 16, starting at around 12:30 Drum Corps International will hold a competition of 25 corps from around the country. On Saturday, July 23, the band U2 will perform. Gates open at 5:00 p.m. and the concert begins at 7:00 p.m.

Openings on City Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Latino Advisory Committee, Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission, Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC), Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Vacancy, and Minneapolis Telecommunications Network (MTN). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Ward Office Hours. Every Tuesday morning I hold "Office Hours" in the Ward from 9:30-11:00am. Please feel free to call for an appointment or just stop by.

1st Tuesdays, Hard Times Café (West Bank/University);
2nd Tuesdays, Muddsuckers Coffee, 1500 Como (SE Como);
3rd Tuesdays, Pratt School (Prospect Park);
4th Tuesdays, the Birchwood Cafe (Seward/Longfellow).

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/>