

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to the Prospect Park East River Road Neighborhood, 9-21-09

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

Items:

- 1) Pratt School
- 2) Profile Music Center
- 3) University Stadium
- 4) Nice Ride Bike Sharing Program
- 5) Najaf Delegation
- 6) Expansion of Premises Near Stadium
- 7) Hydrothermal Project
- 8) 2010 Budget
- 9) Park Board Charter Amendment
- 10) Target Center Green Roof
- 11) Council Supervision of Police Department
- 12) Openings on Boards and Commissions

- 1) Last week, I attended a Minneapolis Public Schools public hearing on the proposal to close several schools, including Pratt. I made the case that Pratt is a successful neighborhood school, and that MPS should keep it open and support it. I have been in contact with three School Board members, and hope that the outcome of tomorrow's Board meeting is positive for Pratt and for Prospect Park.
- 2) As you have likely heard, there was a homicide this summer at the Profile Music Center at 27th and University. I have been in contact with both Second Precinct Inspector Bryan Schafer and the Profile's management, and it sounds like progress is being made. First, the Profile has agreed to permanently cease putting on the type of show that resulted in this homicide (and many other fights and problems of other kinds). Second, the Inspector has toured the venue and set his expectations for how it will be managed, and reports that Profile was cooperative. I hope that this tragic event will be the wakeup call needed to produce a significant change in the atmosphere at this intersection, and that the neighborhood will never again be subjected to spillover violence and disruption from this business.
- 3) The new University Stadium has held its first two games, and I've been impressed by the work that the U and the City have put into limiting the disruption to the surrounding neighborhoods from these events. I have heard few complaints about the games, making me hopeful that this will not prove to be a major problem for residents. I'm proud of the work that the City has done, including dramatically increasing the staffing of the Second Precinct on game days to deal with traffic and behavioral issues and sending our inspections staff out into the neighborhoods to catch unlicensed tailgating and other problematic activities on residential lots. There are clearly some bugs to be worked out, but it seems like we're off to a good start.
- 4) Minneapolis is on track to launch *Nice Ride MN*, the first large-scale bike sharing system in the United States, next May. Right now, the program is planning kiosk locations, and there are several proposed to be installed in and around Prospect Park, including near the following intersections: University/Washington and Oak/Delaware. *Nice Ride* will put approximately 1,000 bicycles onto Minneapolis streets, locked in self-service kiosks. In addition to the University area, kiosks will be located in downtown, uptown, Eat Street, Midtown, Seward, Dinkytown, Cedar Riverside, and the Warehouse district. The input/comment period lasts through October 30th, so get your responses in before then to help determine the final location of these bicycle rental kiosks. If you'd like more information on the upcoming *Nice Ride MN* program, please visit www.niceridemn.com or call Bill Dossett at 612-926-9218.
- 5) This week Minneapolis is welcoming a delegation from our newest Sister City: Najaf, Iraq. I will be helping to lead our response, by attending events with the visiting Najaf elected officials and appearing on Almanac this coming weekend to talk about this new relationship. I helped lead the City's process for forming this new Sister City relationship, and I'm glad to have the opportunity to get it started positively.

- 6) This Wednesday at 1pm there will be a public hearing in room 317 of City Hall for the ordinance I've authored which will, if passed, give establishments within a defined area near the new U Stadium the opportunity to expand their alcohol and food service to parking lots directly adjacent to their buildings. I have been careful to limit the area, to reduce the impact to Prospect Park, and to ensure that each day a business wishes to expand their premises will be a separate application. I understand that the two bars that have requested this change have had events on their parking lots during these first two games, and I have not heard a single complaint. One of my hopes is that, by allowing licensed businesses with good security and alcohol service training to better compete with tailgating, we can improve the situation in the surrounding neighborhoods on game days.
- 7) The Health, Energy and Environment committee has heard a report on a fascinating and exciting new hydrothermal energy facility to be located at the East Bank Mills project that could, if successful, heat and cool up to four million square feet of residential and commercial buildings with little or no carbon emissions. The technology would use water from the Mississippi as a heat exchange, similar to how geothermal projects use the ambient temperature of the ground. It is also proposed to use the existing drop shafts to generate enough electricity to power the heat pumps. City staff has recommended that the Council devote a \$30,000 planning loan to this project, and I was proud to move their recommendation in committee today.
- 8) We are holding a public hearing to gather input that should help us consider amendments before we approve a final budget on December 7. The **public hearing on the 2010 City budget will be held on Thursday, Nov. 19, 6:05 p.m. at City Hall, 350 South 5th Street, room 317.** You can review the proposed budget at www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/city-budget. Serious fiscal challenges we face include state funding cuts of \$13.2 million in 2008, \$8.5 M in 2009, and \$21.3 M in 2010; health insurance costs close to 40 million this year that are expected to continue to go up: increases in required funding for pensions to a projected \$25.1 million in 2010. To balance the budget, the Mayor has proposed a total City spending cut of \$100 million, including \$19 million in cuts to the general fund that will lead to about 225 (out of nearly 4,000) position eliminations including roughly 49 fewer police officers and 21 fewer fire fighters. He is also proposing an overall property tax increase of 11.3% for 2010, dropping to 5.5% in 2011, and then 6% in 2012. Tax payers will get some relief in 2010 because a large number of properties not currently paying into our general fund (but into a special fund for NRP instead) will contribute some \$20 – 24 million. That means that even though the overall amount of taxes we can collect will increase by 11.3% (under the proposed budget), the real impact on individuals will be closer to 6%. Please let me know what you think of this and if you need more information.
- 9) Last month, I voted against a motion to prevent the Park Board charter amendment from being placed on the ballot primarily because I wanted to respect the valid work done by the petitioners. Subsequently, a judge has concurred with the City Attorney and ruled the charter amendment unconstitutional and in violation of state law and so it will not be on the ballot unless the group appeals this decision and prevails in a higher court. I hope it is not appealed and believe it is time we return to the spirit of the agreement reached earlier this year to form a blue ribbon committee to study the relationship between the City and the Park Board, and come up with more thoughtful and constructive recommendations for improving it.
- 10) The new green roof on this city-owned arena is finished. It is the largest green roof in Minnesota and the first green roof installed on an arena in North America. The 2.5 acre roof will capture nearly 1 million gallons of storm water annually by to prevent drainage into the Mississippi River and possible sewage overflow. In addition to storm water drainage prevention, the roof will help mitigate the heat island effect in downtown and provide plant and animal habitat. It is planted with a variety of Minnesota prairie plants, including Columbine, Prairie Coreopsis, Wild Strawberry, Dotted Blazing-Star, and Lupine. Lupines target the Karner Blue Butterfly, a federally listed endangered butterfly that needs them to survive.
- 11) The City Charter is clear, and the City Attorney recently reminded the City Council during our discussions about who sets police policy, that the Mayor has full supervisory authority over the Minneapolis Police Department. While the Council does approve the appointment of the Chief and the department's budget every year, it appears likely that the residents of Minneapolis might benefit from a more direct role for the City Council in the supervision and policy-level management of the department. So, this month I began more formally exploring possible changes to our charter that would give the City Council, as well as the Mayor, the powers "connected with and incident to the establishment, maintenance, appointment, removal, discipline, control and supervision of its police force."
- 12) There are openings on the Public Health Advisory Committee (open until filled), Public Housing Authority Board of Commissioners (closes 10/16), and Zoning Board of Adjustment (closes 9/25). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.