

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Southeast Como, 5-6-08

Cam's next Southeast Como Office Hours:
Tuesday, May 13, 9:30-11:00am
SECIA Office, 837 15th Ave SE

Items:

- 1) University District Partnership Alliance
- 2) Assault in SE Como
- 3) Second Precinct Open House
- 4) Personal Safety Workshop
- 5) New Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator
- 6) 32 New Officers
- 7) Safety and Outreach Intern
- 8) Central Corridor
- 9) Lurking and Loitering
- 10) Racial Disparities
- 11) Ranked Choice Voting
- 12) Bike/Walk to Work Day
- 13) No-Heat/Low-Heat
- 14) Free Speech and the RNC
- 15) Mentoring Program
- 16) Globe Tool
- 17) Affordable Housing Trust Fund
- 18) Obento-Ya
- 19) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) In April, the University District Partnership Alliance Steering Committee approved a demonstration project that could bring up to \$730,000 to help preserve and encourage homeownership in the area. The Alliance includes the neighborhoods of Southeast Como, Prospect Park and Cedar Riverside. The approved proposal, entitled Preserving, Maintaining, and Increasing Homeownership, seeks to restore homeownership confidence and investment in the University District.

Major components of the proposal include:

- An 'option to buy' program for current home owners that will provide up to \$2,500 to people willing to give the Alliance a first option to buy their home when and if they decide to sell it. If it is sold to the Alliance it can then be held for, and sold to, a new owner-occupied home owner. This will be targeted to one area in each of the University neighborhoods, which can demonstrate the power to instill homeowner confidence. The target areas in Marcy Holmes and Southeast Como, however, will serve as the first demonstration project areas for the "option to buy" component in 2008.
 - A "Live Near Your Work" campaign to promote the commitment of the University community and to market its homes to employees in and near the community who would like to live near their work places.
 - A homebuyer assistance program that provides financial incentives of up to \$15,000 in the form of forgivable loans to promote owner-occupied homeownership available to new homebuyers anywhere in the District.
 - Funding up to \$500,000 to provide rehabilitation gap financing to houses that will be bought as owner-occupied homes.
 - Staff to manage the project.
- 2) As you may have heard there was an assault yesterday in the area near 15th and Como. Here are the details I am aware of: in the early morning hours of 05/04/2008, a 20-year-old female was confronted by a stranger inside her residence and sexually assaulted. The victim fled out a 2nd story window and ran to a neighbor's house to report the assault. The victim sustained a broken ankle from the fall. Minneapolis Police are investigating. The suspect is a white male, 5'9" – 6', 18-25 years, medium build, dark hair, scruffy hair on face.
 - 3) MPD and Community Ed are offering a free personal safety workshop at Audubon Park, 29th Ave and Buchanan St NE, on **May 17** from 2-4pm. The instructor is Mary Brandl, a black belt instructor and self-defense expert. She will address self-defense techniques and how to reduce your chance of becoming a victim. Please RSVP to Carol Oosterhuis at (612) 673-2797.
 - 4) The 2nd Precinct Police Station will hold an open house at 1911 Central Ave NE, Monday, May 12, 11am–2pm (Dedication of the Eastside Guardian statue at 12:30).

- 5) The City has hired Bass Zanjani to serve as the Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator for the City of Minneapolis. Mr. Zanjani's chief role will be to work with the City's Youth Violence Prevention Committee to implement the Blueprint for Action to Prevent Youth Violence, a multi-faceted action plan launched this year to reduce youth violence and crime. Zanjani brings to the city's Youth Violence Prevention team a broad and diverse public policy background. Previously, he served as Chief of Staff at NorthPoint Health & Wellness Center and has been a policy aide to two United States Senators (including Paul Wellstone). I believe that this is an important step forward on an initiative that has long been on the top of my list of priorities for the Ward and the City.
- 6) A group of 32 new recruits were sworn in as new Minneapolis police officers in April, taking an oath "To Protect with Courage, To Serve with Compassion." This graduating class consists of 16% women and 28% minority officers. I see this as evidence of the City's continuing prioritization of public safety and the diversification of our police force.
- 7) I have 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.
- 8) There continues to be some controversy about the Central Corridor LRT. While the Met Council continues to work on the details for a Washington Ave. at-grade alignment the University continues to pursue a "Northern Alignment," which would route the LRT line down the existing rail trench through Dinkytown. I have some concerns about this alignment, especially with regards to its impacts on the West Bank. The most important questions, however, are whether this alignment can fit within the Federal Government's funding formula, and whether it will create delays of the project that will cost around \$40 Million in inflationary costs. If the U's alignment cannot fit into the formula on the current timeline, I believe that we should submit our application this year for the Washington Avenue alignment, which should include a pedestrian, transit, and bicycling mall.
- 9) I am moving forward with an effort to repeal the unjust and antiquated Minneapolis "lurking" ordinance. This ordinance disproportionately impacts homeless persons, people of color, and the poor. I believe that we must redirect precious law enforcement resources to behaviors that actually harm someone, and laws that carry meaningful consequences. To accomplish this repeal effort, I will also be adding more behaviors to the loitering ordinance, making it cover crimes related to vandalism and theft. This whole package will come before the Public Service and Regulatory Services Committee on **May 21st** at 1pm.
- 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 5th. The report revealed very disturbing racial disparities. For example, 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. The unemployment rate for whites is just over 4%; for blacks it is nearly **14%**. Additionally, if we looked more exclusively at unemployment rates for young males in these groups the disparities would likely be even more disturbing. At the meeting I was proud to move forward a resolution that, if passed by the Council, will create a joint Minneapolis/Hennepin County Racial Disparities Steering Committee that I hope will help us get a handle on this. It is my hope that by building (and building on already existing) partnerships (first with the County but also with the schools, colleges and employers) and focusing on promising demonstration projects we can begin to make inroads on this problem.
- 11) The City has sent out a Request for Proposals for Ranked Choice Voting equipment and/or services, and passed an ordinance containing our RCV election rules. I worked to make sure that this ordinance conformed to national best practices for ranked choice elections, and that the RFP includes enough flexibility to get good responses, but a specific enough timeline. I continue to push for Minneapolis to conduct its first ranked choice election in 2009.
- 12) My Aide Robin will again be leading a commuter convoy from the Seward neighborhood into downtown on Bike/Walk to Work Day, **Wednesday, May 14th**. Meet at the Birchwood Café for free breakfast items starting at 7:00. The ride leaves at 7:30. To lead your own ride or walk, or for more info on Bike/Walk Week activities, go here: <http://www.bikewalkweek.org>.
- 13) The No-Heat / Low-Heat ordinance I've cosponsored with Ralph Remington has stalled in committee, and will come back again tomorrow. We are attempting to simplify regulations about when landlords must keep rental units adequately warm by basing them on date rather than external temperature. 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.'

- 14)** I continue to oppose mandatory permit processes for protest groups, being brought forward by Council Member Ostrow. 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.
- 15)** 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.
- 16)** Congratulations to the Southeast Como Improvement Association for negotiating a Good Neighbor Agreement with local business Globe Tool, which calls for the business to implement measures to reduce Trichloroethylene (TCE) emissions.
- 17)** The Council has approved loaning \$508,065 to the Van Cleve Court project in Southeast Como.
- 18)** The City has granted Obento-Ya Japanese Bistro in the Southeast Como neighborhood a Class E wine and strong beer license.
- 19)** There are openings on the Civil Rights Commission, Minneapolis Workforce Council (closes 5/9/2008) and Minneapolis Planning Commission. To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.