

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Southeast Como, 9-2-08

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

Items:

- 1) 2009 Budget
- 2) U District Development Study and Moratorium
- 3) A Future for NRP
- 4) RNC-Related Police Actions
- 5) Pedestrian Master Plan Open House
- 6) Washington Bridge Construction
- 7) Pedicabs
- 8) Solar on Convention Center
- 9) Pre-Employment Drug Testing
- 10) Central Corridor
- 11) Assessments
- 12) Online Utility Bills
- 13) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) Mayor Rybak has presented his proposed 2009 budget to the Council. It includes welcome new investments in infrastructure, including \$2.2 million for the U of M bike trail from Bridge 9 to the Transitway through Dinkytown. It also includes the first-ever dedicated bike infrastructure maintenance budget line, which will invest \$100,000 per year into keeping our off-street trails and on-street lanes in good condition. The Mayor has proposed continued funding of \$75,000 for preventing youth violence. The request includes a smaller than expected property tax increase of 6.9% (less than the 8% increases of past years). The 2009 budget will be adopted in December. 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.
- 2) In August, the City Council approved a development moratorium I proposed for the University District neighborhoods (Marcy Holmes, Prospect Park, Southeast Como and Cedar Riverside). The moratorium prohibits demolition of single family homes, duplexes and triplexes, and also bars new construction of 1-4 unit residential developments. However, projects that wish to be exempted from the moratorium may apply for a waiver that must be approved by the City's Zoning and Planning Committee. The purpose of the moratorium is to give City Planning staff the space to work with the University District Partnership Alliance and the neighborhoods on a study to address land use and development concerns in the University district, including parking, occupancy, design standards, zoning, inspections and the development review process. The moratorium will ensure that property owners do not make major changes while the study is being completed. The moratorium issue will come before the Zoning and Planning Committee for a public hearing after more specifics about the proposal and when waivers would be granted has been written.
- 3) Progress is being made towards securing a neighborhood revitalization program in the future and I am more hopeful than ever that empowered neighborhood based-planning will be a more lasting part of our City, even after Phase 2 of NRP. I am also reasonable sure that it will look different than the current program. Last month the NRP Framework for the Future work group gave its final [report](#). And the Mayor's five year budget proposal recommends significant spending on neighborhood organizations and supports discretionary funding. The most significant recommendations in the report include the creation of a new resident-controlled 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 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. It looks like there will be between 5 and 10 million dollars a year, starting in 2012, that will be committed to neighborhood discretionary spending to implement approved plans. One of the more interesting documents to come forward is an [alternative proposed](#) by a group of residents known as "neighors4nrp." The proposal makes several concrete recommendations that are certainly worth considering that I have been reviewing carefully. So far I plan to focus efforts on clarifying and strengthening the authority of the new resident board or commissioner and exploring how to keep other jurisdictions involved in it. I will also be fighting for at least 10 millions dollars a year to be available for neighborhood-based projects and to have the 3 million to support basic administration come from the general fund.

- 4) There have been reports of multiple incidents in the last weeks in which journalists and citizens with cameras have been detained, and in one case had their possessions confiscated by the MPD. At 1:30AM Tuesday morning, three out-of-town journalists were detained walking from a bus stop to their temporary residence, questioned at length about their plans to document RNC-related protests, and had recording devices, phones, clothing, and papers confiscated. My office pushed for MPD to release their belongings, which MPD did on Wednesday afternoon. A KSTP photographer was also barred from filming a protest in a government office Monday, and an ex-Fox 9 employee was detained and verbally abused in North Minneapolis after taking pictures of MPD officers. As you've likely read, the MPD was also involved in the arrest of Amy Goodman and other reporters from the Democracy Now! radio program. They also participated in the preemptive raids of several houses in Minneapolis. I am extremely concerned that these events set exactly the wrong tone as the RNC approaches. I am disappointed that the Police Policies Resolution passed unanimously by the Council in July, which contains explicit prohibitions against confiscating recording devices, seems to have had so little effect on MPD behavior. Council Member Elizabeth Glidden and I have released a statement calling the preemptive raids into question, and I am working on a more comprehensive statement against police abuses of authority with fellow concerned Council Members from Minneapolis and St. Paul.
- 5) The City will be hosting a second public meeting to share results and seek input on the Minneapolis Citywide Pedestrian Master Plan on **Thursday, September 18**, 5:30-8:30pm, Minneapolis Central Library, 300 Nicollet Mall. More information is available at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/pedestrian/pedestrian-masterplan.asp>.
- 6) Due to concerns about the strength of the upper pedestrian and bicycle deck of the Washington Avenue bridge, Hennepin County has closed all but the 'breezeway,' the sheltered semi-indoor space at the center of the bridge. With the high ped/bike volumes on the bridge, it will be fairly congested until construction is completed. I have been assured by Commissioner McLaughlin's office that they are striving to get this work done as soon as possible next spring or early summer. While the U is looking into possibilities for keeping a bike facility on the bridge, it may be helpful for as many cyclists as possible to use Bridge 9 to get from the East Bank to the West Bank.
- 7) With my strong support, the Council has loosened the regulations on Pedicabs, making it easier and cheaper for new companies to get through our regulatory hurdles, and removing the space and time limitations that have effectively regulated them out of existence until now. I look forward to seeing the growth of this unique, green industry in Minneapolis.
- 8) The proposed 600kW solar installation on the Convention Center has been sent back to committee for further work. I hope that this move does not prevent us from moving forward on this groundbreaking project, and does not imperil the grant we received from the Public Utilities Commission.
- 9) I continued to have concerns about the drug testing regime brought forward by Human Resources staff, which was so broad that it covered people who empty our parking meters. I was joined in voting against this policy by Council Members Benson, Goodman and Remington.
- 10) The City has submitted our comments to the Central Corridor's Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement. We expect the Met Council to submit the application for federal funding in early September, as planned. The City is very engaged in conversations about the layout of the Washington Ave transit/pedestrian mall. Our goal is to maximize pedestrian space, ensure that buses and trains can operate effectively on the mall, and provide a predictable space in which bicyclists can operate.
- 11) New property value statements for those owners impacted by the Department of Revenue's mandated 5 percent property value increase were mailed out at the end of August. All homeowners in the Como area are affected by this. For property owners who desire additional information regarding their increase there is the Frequently Asked Questions document on the City Assessor's web page. I am still have concerns about how we got into this situation and how the Como neighborhoods were selected and am exploring ways we can make sure this doesn't happen again. You should feel free to contact the City Assessor, Patrick Todd (Patrick.Todd@ci.minneapolis.mn.us, 673-3535 for help understanding the nature of this unfortunate situation and your option to appeal your value through tax court.
- 12) 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 save 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.
- 13) There are openings on the Civilian Police Review Authority (closes 9/12/08). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.