

# Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Seward Neighborhood, 1-24-07

Cam's next Seward Office Hours:  
Tuesday, February 27, 9:30-11:00am  
Birchwood Café, 3311 E 25th St

## Items:

- 1) Condo Conversion ordinance
- 2) Republican National Committee
- 3) Roundtable Recap
- 4) "Lurking" ordinance
- 5) Somali Youth Report
- 6) Pi
- 7) Community Engagement Report – final input sessions
- 8) Youth Violence Steering Committee
- 9) Maximum Occupancy
- 10) African Development Center
- 11) Chief Bleskachek
- 12) Openings on Boards and Commissions

- 1) The Condo Conversion ordinance I am sponsoring will be coming for a public hearing on **Wednesday, January 31**, at 1pm at the Public Safety & Regulatory Services committee. The goal is to prevent the loss of affordable rental housing due to condo conversions and to protect condo buyers. Please attend, if you can, and advocate for affordable housing preservation in Minneapolis.
- 2) The Mayor has signed the contract to bring the Republican convention to Minneapolis in 2008. I have been concerned about whether free speech rights of residents and visitors will be violated, as they have in past conventions, so I created an internal work group to create a model for how the City can preserve the right to political speech and civic debate without disrupting community life during the Convention. The group includes the Mayor, up to two Council Members, the relevant department heads, and two representatives of civil liberties groups such as the ACLU and National Lawyers Guild. I also attempted to change the contract to ensure that the Minneapolis Police Department would have a say in approving the Convention Security Plan, but my colleagues ultimately voted this proposal down.
- 3) Last week, I held a roundtable discussion at Saint Martin's Table on ending homelessness and decriminalizing poverty. Thirty-three people attended and shared their hopes and ideas for how to transition people out of homelessness constructively and effectively. I believe the plan that the Council passed in December offers us a clear path to follow, and will continue to support it.
- 4) Encouraged by the positive response at the roundtable, I am moving forward with an effort to repeal the Minneapolis "lurking" ordinance. Minneapolis is one of only four cities in the US with "lurking" ordinances. Approximately 90% of arrests for lurking end in dismissal of charges, and approximately 90% of those arrested are people of color. The ordinance is very often used on people experiencing homelessness. It is expensive to enforce and produces little to no constructive effects. I am currently working with the Council on Crime and Justice to build a broad community coalition to push for this unnecessary law to be repealed, and I invite you to join us.
- 5) The Civil Rights Department has released a report on Somali Youth Issues, and presented it to the Health, Energy and Environment Committee. You can read the full report here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/civil-rights/docs/somali-report.pdf>. If you would like a copy of the report sent to you or have additional questions you can contact me or Kelly Brewer of the Minneapolis Department of Civil Rights at 612-673-2091.

Recommendations include:

- 1) Address concerns through the City/County Youth Coordinating Board,
  - 2) Reduce Somali youth crime by collaborating with philanthropic agencies to create a “drop in” center in the Cedar Riverside area.
  - 3) Develop and implement a community outreach plan to identify individuals who can advise the City on community needs, to inform people of existing services and to build trust and lasting relationships.
- 6) After an extremely positive public hearing earlier this month, the Public Safety & Regulatory Services committee approved the liquor license for the new restaurant and nightclub “Pi” with my support last Wednesday. I expect it to be approved by the full Council on Friday, and look forward to welcoming Tara, her business partners, staff and customers to the neighborhood.
- 7) The City has completed a Community Engagement Report and is soliciting public comments. The official comment period ends February 8th. This report, and the comments we receive, will serve as a foundation for important City Council policy discussions and decisions in February, March and April. You can read the report online at [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/news/docs/CE\\_Report\\_final.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/news/docs/CE_Report_final.pdf), and send comments to [clara.perrin@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:clara.perrin@ci.minneapolis.mn.us). There will also be public meetings throughout the City. For Cedar Riverside, the meeting is **Monday, February 5, 7–8:30pm, Mill City Museum, 704 S 2<sup>nd</sup> St.** For Cooper and Seward, the meeting is **Tuesday, January 30, 7–8:30pm, Plaza Verde, 1516 E Lake St.** For Southeast Como and Prospect Park, the meeting is **Wednesday, January 31, 7–8:30 pm, Marcy Open School, 415 4th Avenue SE.** For the full list of public meeting times and locations, go here: [http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/news/20061121CE\\_Report.asp](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/news/20061121CE_Report.asp). To complete a community engagement survey, go here: <http://www.nrp.org/R2/News/NewsArch/2007/20070118.html>.
- 8) The Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee will be created this coming Friday. I will serve on it, along with the Mayor, Chief Dolan, Health Commissioner Musicant, Youth Coordinating Board Chair Judith Kahn, Shukri Adan and many other committed, deeply involved people. I believe this is an incredibly important step towards keeping our youth from becoming victims and perpetrators of violence, one of our City’s main goals.
- 9) I am planning to introduce subject matter in February to make Minneapolis’ two contradictory maximum occupancy ordinances consistent, understandable and fair. The two ordinances are the Housing Maintenance code 244.810, which is primarily concerned with health and safety of tenants, and the Zoning code 546.50, which is primarily concerned with density. I am planning to create a work group to help craft a solution – please contact my office if you are interested in participating.
- 10) Understanding that traditional forms of financing involving interest/usury (Reba), directly or indirectly, are not allowed according to Islamic law (or Sharia), the City is partnering with the African Development Center (ADC) to establish an Alternative Financing Loan Program. The City will be allocating \$487,656 to this program, allowing Muslim entrepreneurs to raise capital without taking out interest. I am optimistic that this will help the formation of new immigrant small businesses.
- 11) The Council voted in December to remove Chief Bleskachek. The terms of the settlement between the City and Bleskachek are the following: she is demoted to a non-supervisory position, and will never supervise personnel again; she will not contest the demotion; she is not paid severance; her pay is reduced by \$40,000/year; she was required to write a letter of remorse, which she did. I voted in favor of this settlement. The City Coordinator has been instructed to review our Ethics ordinance to determine what additional requirements are necessary to ensure that this sort of failure of leadership does not happen again.
- 12) There are openings on the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, the **new** Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the Minneapolis Empowerment Zone Governance Board, the Senior Citizen Advisory Committee, the Minneapolis Private Industry/Workforce Council, the Latino Advisory Committee, the Minneapolis Telecommunications Network board, the Minneapolis Charter Commission and the Public Health Advisory Committee. To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).