

# Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to the Seward Neighborhood Group August 26, 2015

## Cam's Upcoming Office Hours Near Seward:

Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, 9:30-11:00am, Blue Moon Coffee Café, 3822 E Lake St

### Items:

- 1) Franklin Open Streets
- 2) 29<sup>th</sup> Ave S Closure
- 3) Franklin/Cedar/Minnehaha
- 4) Protected Bikeway Funding
- 5) Pollinator Friendly Community Resolution
- 6) 2015 City Academy
- 7) Tri-State Bearing Building
- 8) Rental Housing Tiers
- 9) Parking Reform
- 10) Plastic Bags
- 11) Seward Towers
- 12) Neighborhood Data
- 13) Openings on Boards and Commissions

- 1) I was delighted to participate in Open Streets Minneapolis on Franklin Avenue, August 16. A 1.8-mile stretch of Franklin was transformed into a community building, people friendly, car free place to enjoy biking, walking, skating, playing and using wheelchairs without the presence of motorized traffic. I thank all the individuals and organizations that participated and helped make it such a success.
- 2) The temporary closure of 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue South at the Midtown Greenway has generated a lot of contacts to the City, and they have been overwhelmingly positive. I hear that staff will leave the closure in place until November 1, to get a good idea of how the closure operates when Seward Montessori is in session. Given the broad-based support for this closure, I will be advocating for Public Works to put a permanent closure into effect as soon as possible. I will also continue to push for the other traffic changes SNG has requested in the area, including flipping the stop sign at 30<sup>th</sup> Ave S and the Greenway.
- 3) As you may have seen at Open Streets, Hennepin County and the City have come up with a possible design for the intersection of Cedar, Franklin and Minnehaha that will dramatically improve the intersection's operation for all modes, but especially for pedestrians and bicyclists. It involves closing Minnehaha north of Franklin, and opening 22<sup>nd</sup> St E for left turns from Cedar. I applaud staff for working on these creative solutions, and look forward to seeing them implemented.
- 4) The City has received over \$3.8 million in federal transportation funding through a Met Council solicitation to build protected bikeway infrastructure. This includes funding for the routes near the U of M (19th and 20th Avenues S, 10th Ave SE, 15th Ave SE, Rollins Ave SE, and 18th Ave SE). I consider this a great example of the importance of adopting the Protected Bikeways Plan. I expect that we will get more funding from outside sources, along with the funding already committed by the City, to implement this plan.
- 5) The Council unanimously passed the Pollinator Friendly Community resolution I coauthored with CM Linea Palmisano. This is a great first step towards making our city even more of a refuge for pollinators, which are a critical part of healthy ecosystems, including our food system. The City will now be phasing out the small amount of pesticides we do use, and planting much more habitat and forage. We are also calling on everyone - residents, businesses, other institutions - to join us in taking these actions. You can read the resolution here: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@clerk/documents/webcontent/wcms1q-079170.pdf>.
- 6) People interested in learning more about how our city works may enroll in a City Academy program. Participants will tour the City's Strategic Operations Center, learn the latest in firefighting techniques, discover how the Minneapolis water utility is operated and tour the water treatment plant, find out how future developments are planned and constructed, learn about police procedures, find out how taxes are levied and budgets approved and can ask questions of City government leaders. The Academy will be held weekly from Sept. 23 through Oct.21 at locations throughout Minneapolis. Each session will focus on one aspect of City government such as public safety,

public works, planning and development and fire services. Sessions will run from 6:30 to 9 p.m. The program is open to all Minneapolis residents 18 years or older. Anyone interested in taking part can complete the application form at [www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/MinneapolisCityAcademy](http://www.minneapolismn.gov/ncr/MinneapolisCityAcademy). The registration deadline is this Friday, Aug. 28, 2015.

- 7) I am working with the new owners of the old Tri-State Bearing building at 3414 25<sup>th</sup> St E to ensure that they can put the building to good use. Their current plan is a daycare, which I understand has a lot of support from the community. My office is working with City staff and the owners to guide this through the City's processes.
- 8) The City has completed ranking all the rental properties in the city into the new three tier system first approved by the Council in 2011 and recently strengthened this spring to include increased fees for tier 2 and 3 properties. The results show that, of a total of 17,104 single family, duplex and triplex rental properties, 82% are in tier 1, 16% are in tier 2 and 3% are in tier 3. Of the 6,477 larger apartment buildings, 95.8% are in tier 1, 3.7% in 2 and only 0.5% (or 34) are in tier 3. Tier 1 properties have no or few problems and are considered to be well maintained and managed. Tier 2 properties are maintained to minimum standards but have some issues that require some city services. Tier 3 properties are ranked as poorly maintained or managed and require excessive city services. Properties in the higher tiers will be inspected more frequently and charged higher fees. Properties in the lowest tier will be inspected less frequently and have lower fees. All properties will be evaluated annually to determine the tier they will be assigned to.
- 9) I was happy to support Council Member Lisa Bender's change to parking minimums along transit corridors and reduce the amount of required off-street parking in certain areas. With this action, smaller-scale (50 units or less), multifamily residential developments within one-quarter mile of frequent bus service and one-half mile of rail service will have their off-street parking requirement eliminated. For larger-scale multifamily residential developments in those same geographic areas, parking requirements will be reduced by 50 percent, to one-half space per dwelling unit. Since 2009, the City has not had parking requirements in its downtown zoning districts. I view this as a step towards making it easier to build more affordable housing, and a useful reorientation of our society away from cars and towards walking, biking and transit.
- 10) I have formally introduced the subject matter of a new ordinance that would regulate carry-out bags in retail establishments. The general plan is to prohibit standard carry-out plastic bags and require retailers to charge for paper bags. I plan to do significant public engagement on this ordinance, including both broad-based resident outreach and specific targeted conversations with businesses that will be impacted, recycling facilities, and environmental groups. I am also working to coordinate efforts with St. Louis Park, where a similar ban is also being considered.
- 11) The City has accepted funding awards on behalf of the Seward Towers' equally \$739,200 --- \$517,950 from the Metropolitan Council and \$221,250 from Hennepin County. Seward Towers ownership entity intends to convey the buildings to a tax credit limited partnership as part of an effort to renovate the existing buildings to a 20-year standard in order to preserve the existing federal Section 8 contracts. The planned renovations include new replacement windows and building systems/code upgrades. The projected total development cost is \$93,779,104. The awarded grant funds will be used primarily for the abatement of asbestos in the existing buildings.
- 12) The Department of Regulatory Services unveiled a new initiative that makes a wealth of data available to the general public. Reports, interactive maps and profiles can be used to see trends, to obtain specific information, to learn more about what the department does and to find further resources and tools. This includes very informative and detailed ward-level and neighborhood-level profiles. It is a gold mine of information for policy makers and community activists alike. I encourage you to dig in and use it. Get started at <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/regservices/WCMS1P-135530>
- 13) Visit the City's website for a [full list of appointment opportunities](#) and position descriptions for City boards and commissions. Appointments to boards and commissions are made twice a year — in the spring and fall. This streamlined appointment process makes it easier for folks to learn about volunteer opportunities, ensures a more open and understandable process for residents and staff, and increases the diversity of the applicant pool.