



Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Prospect Park, 9-28-15

Cam's next Prospect Park Office Hours:
Overflow Café, 2929 University Ave SE
Thursday, October 10th, 9:30-11am

Cam Gordon

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Items:

- 1) Prospect Park Trail
- 2) University Avenue Innovation District Resolution
- 3) Grain Elevator Task Force
- 4) New BAC Appointee
- 5) 2016 Budget
- 6) I-94 Long Range Planning
- 7) Electric Steel Elevators
- 8) Ordinance on Fire Response Fees
- 9) Pollinator Friendly City Resolution
- 10) "Bring Your Own Bag" Ordinance
- 11) Openings on Boards and Commissions

- 1) Soo Line Railroad has begun the process to abandon their railroad right-of-way between just southeast of Essex and just southeast of their bridge over I-94. The City Attorney's Office has, with my strong support and with a lot of help from my office, sent a formal request (pending Council approval) to the Surface Transportation Board to enter into negotiations with the railroad to use this right-of-way as a bicycle and pedestrian trail. This trail is in the Minneapolis Bike Plan as the "Prospect Park Trail," and will, when fully completed, go from Essex in the north to the bridge over the Mississippi in the south, and hopefully connect across to the Midtown Greenway. I expect the Council's Transportation and Public Works committee to verify this petition tomorrow, and the full Council to agree next week. This begins a process of negotiations with the railroad that I hope will be fruitful, and lead to the City acquiring or being able to use this right-of-way for a trail connection from Franklin Ave SE, alongside the northeast edge of East River Mews, across 27th Ave SE, and up to Essex. We have also made clear to the private property owners and developers that we hope and expect to see this trail connect all the way to Essex. I especially want to thank Peter Wagenius in Mayor Hodges' office for all of his help on this.
- 2) The resolution I've authored designating the Prospect North area as an Innovation District has passed the Council's Zoning and Planning and Community Development committees. I expect it to pass the Transportation and Public Works committee tomorrow, September 29th, and pass the full Council next Friday, October 9th. This resolution is a small first step towards the redevelopment of Prospect North as an integrated district that shares the management of many district services like energy, stormwater, parking, placemaking and more.
- 3) I am working to put together a Grain Elevator Task Force of City staff from multiple departments to talk about the concerns and opportunities that come with the old, vacant grain elevators in Minneapolis, many of which are in Ward 2. I am very concerned about the ongoing safety issues posed by these buildings, and want to find ways to honor the important contribution they make to our history while also moving them to either adaptive reuse or demolition in a timely manner.
- 4) I have appointed eastside resident Hilary Lovelace to the Minneapolis Bicycle Advisory Committee. I am thrilled to be able to put such a bright resident of the Southeast Como neighborhood on such an important, influential City commission. Hilary is also a member of the Southeast Como Improvement Association and a student at the University of MN pursuing a Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning. I am very grateful for her willingness to serve.

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Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la' aan wac 612- 673-3737.

- 5) Mayor Hodges has presented her proposed 2016 budget, and outlined initiatives and priorities for next year's spending. I was glad to see the Mayor continue to emphasize equity throughout the budget and to identify climate change, racial and economic injustice, transportation alternatives and preparing for a new kind of economic future as priorities. I am generally supportive of her proposed levy and overall budget increase. The Mayor and finance staff project that nearly two-thirds of property owners in the city will see a *reduction* in city property taxes next year. I am also generally supportive of the Mayor's proposed spending priorities, which include the environment (through investments in LED streetlights, the Clean Energy Partnership, Zero Waste programs, a Green Business matching fund, and a Green Zone pilot program), justice (funding for police body cameras, ADA compliance staff, restorative justice, and the Working Families agenda), affordable housing, making it easier for businesses to work with the City, and more.
- 6) I met recently with staff from The MN Department of Transportation to discuss a planning effort they are starting, that would ultimately lead to a reconstruction of I-94 through Minneapolis and St. Paul. According to information shared at the meeting, "While there is some project funding in 2020 and 2021, and there are some locations that will need rehabilitation in the short term, the goal of this project is to truly engage a wide variety of people regarding the needs associated with this corridor. Then, using that grassroots information, we can develop an approach to address the corridor issues in a more comprehensive, long term and community based way." This is an opportunity to improve, and hopefully mitigate the harms from, this major piece of national infrastructure that cuts through the Second Ward. I see potential for us to recover lost land, secure dedicated and state of the art Bus Rapid Transit in the corridor and perhaps even deck over some of the freeway trench to reconnect communities with added amenities. I commend the department for reaching out to local residents and groups early and am hopeful that this will not result in simply maintaining the status quo or worse yet adding more lanes. For more visit www.mndot.gov or contact brian.isaacson@state.mn.us.
- 7) The Council has unanimously denied the request by of the owners of the Electric Steel elevators to demolish these potentially historic resources. This followed the formal denial of the Heritage Preservation Commission and is in keeping with the position of the Prospect Park Association. The owners and prospective buyers (the University of Minnesota) must now go through a designation study, which will include studying potential reuse of all or some of these structures. I look forward to being as helpful as I can in finding a compromise that will a) deal with the real public safety concerns associated with abandoned grain elevators, which attract "urban explorers" who sometimes get themselves hurt or even killed in these structures, b) allow a real, achievable reuse of the site, and c) respect and preserve the historic nature of these buildings to the extent possible.
- 8) I supported an ordinance authored by Council President Barb Johnson that authorizes the Fire Department to seek cost recovery for technical rescue services necessitated by trespassing or the violation of any other law. The ordinance permits the city to charge fee to any person receiving such technical rescue services based upon trespassing or other law violation and to the owners of the affected property, and makes all such persons jointly and severally liable for such charges. It is my hope that this will help provide a disincentive for "urban explorers" to get into dangerous situations in abandoned elevators, and to the owners of such buildings to keep them secured.
- 9) The Council has unanimously passed the Pollinator Friendly Community resolution I coauthored with CM Linea Palmisano. The resolution commits Minneapolis to increase bee-friendly plants and decrease and ultimately eliminate pesticide use on city-owned and managed property. The resolution also declares Minneapolis a pollinator-friendly community and encourages residents and businesses to adopt pollinator-friendly practices such as planting habitat for bees and avoiding pesticides. Pollinator populations are in sharp decline because of an ongoing loss of habitat coupled with a simultaneous large-scale expansion of pesticide use. I see this as a great step towards reducing pesticide use in our city, supporting our local food economy and making Minneapolis not only a safe refuge for pollinators, but a healthier place for all of us. You can read the resolution here: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/www/groups/public/@clerk/documents/webcontent/wcms1q-079170.pdf>.
- 10) In August, Council Member Warsame and I formally introduced the subject matter of a new ordinance we are drafting that would regulate carry-out bags in retail establishments. The ordinance would prohibit the use of the standard carry-out, handled plastic bags and require retailers to charge a fee (that the retailer would keep) for paper bags. The aim of the ordinance is to motivate shoppers to bring their own reusable bag. I am working on this to reduce litter and other negative environmental impacts, reduce the impact of plastic bags on our recycling system (which is significant), and move Minneapolis a step closer to a Zero Waste future.
- 11) 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.