

# Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Seward Neighborhood, 3-26-08

Cam's next Seward Office Hours:  
Tuesday, April 22, 9:30-11:00am  
Birchwood Café, 3311 E 25th St

## Items:

- 1) April Roundtable: Free Speech and the RNC
- 2) Bike/Walk Opportunities: 24<sup>th</sup> St and 29<sup>th</sup> Ave
- 3) 2212 Minnehaha
- 4) Central Corridor
- 5) NRP
- 6) Bicycles on Marquette and Second
- 7) Earth Hour
- 8) Ranked Choice Voting
- 9) No-Heat/Low-Heat
- 10) Target Center Green Roof
- 11) Rental Conversion Inspection and Fee
- 12) Vacant Building Registration Fee
- 13) BPA and Phthalates outcome
- 14) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) Please join me for my April roundtable discussion on free speech during the Republican convention, **Monday, April 14 7-9PM, Augsburg College, Christiansen center, East Commons**. The Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee will discuss the City's free speech policies in April. I have consistently advocated a voluntary registration process that protesters could use to get City resources and services for their events. I've just as forcefully opposed any attempt to create a mandatory permit process that would enable police officers to arrest anyone taking part in a free speech event without a permit. Come hear more about this and other Convention-related policy discussions, and share your ideas and concerns.
- 2) My office has submitted a proposal to City staff for possible inclusion in the City's 2008 Non-Motorized Transportation applications to make 29<sup>th</sup> Ave S a "Bike Walk Street" from E Franklin to the Greenway. This could include some modifications to the physical layout of the street, including "throating" and traffic circles, and would likely include extra signage, reduced speed limit, and could potentially include removal of stop signs. Seward Redesign has submitted a similar proposal for 24<sup>th</sup> St E, from the LRT Bike Trail to the river. The purpose of these projects would be to better connect planned and existing bike and pedestrian infrastructure (including the Greenway, the LRT Bike Trail, E River Parkway and the planned bike lanes on Minnehaha, E Franklin and Riverside Avenues) to each other and to Matthews Park and Seward Montessori. We should hear from City staff soon about which projects they will be recommending to the Transportation and Public Works committee for inclusion in the City's application for Federal funds. The SNG Community Development Committee discussed these projects at length, and responded favorably. If they are funded, I commit to working with SNG to do even more targeted outreach to residents on and near both streets to ensure that the projects are welcome and positive additions to the neighborhood.
- 3) AA Equipment has requested a zoning variance for their property at 2212 Minnehaha Avenue, to allow its parking lot to be used for storage of equipment. This application is in response to a zoning inspection that found them in violation. I will be cautiously considering this application, keeping in mind that variances are permanently attached to properties, meaning that this lot could well be used for outside equipment storage for many years to come.
  - 4) As expected, the Central Corridor Management Committee voted in February to take the Washington Ave tunnel off the table. I am working extensively with City staff, the Mayor's office, the University and community members to come up with a Washington Ave at-grade option that will have the least negative impacts on the surrounding community. This will include a significant investment in mitigation (up to \$20 million in the last CCMC action), possible commitments from the Legislature for 'reliever' projects such as Granary Road, and ensuring to the extent possible that the project holds affected property owners harmless during construction and beyond. I am strongly advocating that local-service busses remain on the Washington transit mall, despite the University's stated wish to move them to other city streets.

- 5) Working with my colleague Scott Benson, I successfully convinced my colleagues to support a resolution calling for an extension of the pre-1979 tax increment financing districts in the Minneapolis Common Project that have been used to fund the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. It directs staff to work with the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, the Minneapolis Legislative delegation, and other partners in neighborhood revitalization efforts to develop a bill to extend the pre-1979 tax districts to: (1) \$100 million to allow the City to fund the administrative and programmatic needs of a neighborhood revitalization program that includes support for neighborhood organizations and neighborhood-directed action plans after 2009 in the City of Minneapolis); (2) \$100 million to fund repayment of the Target Center bonds and the capital improvements necessary for Target Center to remain a first class facility as required by contract; and (3) Provide continuing support for discretionary development investments by the City of Minneapolis, and if Hennepin County decides to participate in the funding of a future neighborhood revitalization program, provide funding support to County investments that benefit the County and City.
- 6) Working with allies in the bicycle community (including members of the City's Bicycle Advisory Committee) and Council Members Lilligren and Schiff, I helped lead an effort to increase the width of Marquette and Second Avenues in downtown, to accommodate future bicycle lanes. The existing bicycle lanes are slated to be removed as part of the downtown transportation action plan, partly to make way for double-wide bus lanes which will triple bus volume on both streets. My hope is that in the near future, the City can approach the state for a waiver of their street standards, to narrow the two traffic lanes enough to put five-foot bike lanes on the right-hand side of the street.
- 7) The Council passed an amendment to our regulations of grocery stores that included a requirement I have been fighting hard for: that all grocery stores in Minneapolis will have at least five varieties of fresh produce. This seemingly obvious regulation (which my office has heard, surprisingly, is extremely uncommon in other cities) will help increase access to fresh, healthy foods for all Minneapolitans. It will also help the City get a handle on some of the worst convenience stores in neighborhoods.
- 8) Council Member Benson and I cosponsored a resolution committing the City to turn off all lights that are not absolutely necessary on Earth Hour, this Saturday from 8-9pm. Look for the lights of some major downtown buildings to go dark, including Wells Fargo, IDS, Thrivent Financial, US Bancorp and the State, Orpheum and Pantages theaters, as well as the lights on the underside of the Stone Arch Bridge. The idea is to demonstrate how much impact just an hour of energy conservation can have on carbon emissions, to inspire others to conserve.
- 9) Council Member Glidden has introduced an ordinance establishing vote counting rules and procedures for Ranked Choice Voting elections. Earlier this month, I successfully pushed for a Request for Proposals for election equipment and/or services that will allow Minneapolis to implement Ranked Choice Voting in 2009.
- 10) Council Member Remington has introduced an ordinance changing the regulations around no-heat and low-heat conditions for tenants, establishing a clearer, more enforceable code that will help the City better ensure that tenants have adequate heat, especially in the autumn and spring. My office has worked extensively on this ordinance with CM Remington's office, and I am very supportive of it.
- 11) The Council has decided to go out for bids on constructing what could be the second largest green roof in the country, on top of the Target Center. I made the motion in committee to focus only on options that included green roof components. We will receive these bids back this fall.
- 12) The Council has passed an ordinance requiring an initial housing inspection of every rental unit that changes ownership or transitions to rental from homeownership, and charging a fee for these inspections. The conversion fee is \$1,000. This action accomplishes a number of important goals: 1) it ensures that every newly converted rental unit is up to code, protecting tenant safety; 2) it gives a financial disincentive to convert a homesteaded property to rental, helping to slow the rate of conversion.
- 13) The City has changed the vacant building registration fee from \$2,000 to \$6,000, to help cover our costs in dealing with vacant and boarded properties (which can be substantial) and to help encourage owners of vacant buildings to do something with them.
- 14) The resolution I authored supporting bills in the State Legislature calling for a phase-out of the known endocrine disruptors Bisphenol-A and phthalates unanimously passed the Council last month.
- 15) There are openings on the Minneapolis Ethical Practices Board (closes 3/31/2008), Latino Advisory Committee, (3/28/2008), Minneapolis Planning Commission (3/28/08), Public Health Advisory Committee (3/28/2008), Rental Dwelling License Board of Appeals (3/28/2008), Zoning Board of Adjustment (3/28/2008) To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).