

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Southeast Como, 4-07-09

Cam's next Southeast Como Office Hours:
Tuesday, April 14, 9:30-11:00am
SECIA Office, 837 15th Ave SE

Items:

- 1) April Roundtable
- 2) Heritage Preservation Ordinance
- 3) Relative Homesteads
- 4) Upholstered Furniture
- 5) University Ordinance Making Authority
- 6) University District Alliance Report
- 7) Police Policy and Procedure Manual
- 8) Meetings to Discuss Charter Proposals
- 9) Park Dedication Fee
- 10) Trees for \$25
- 11) New Domestic Violence Initiative
- 12) Climate Change Grants
- 13) Openings on City Boards and Commissions

- 1) Please join me for a roundtable discussion on **supporting our neighborhood businesses** on **April 23rd, 7-9pm** at **Joe's Market and Deli**, 1828 SE Como Ave. In these tough economic times, it's more important than ever for us to support our small, community-based independent businesses. I will be joined by Longfellow Business Association Co-Chair Scott Cramer, Seward Civic and Commerce Association President Jim Welna, Southeast Business Association Executive Director Michael McLaughlin for a conversation about the vital role of small businesses and business associations in our local economy.
- 2) Responding to the concerns of neighborhood groups, I attempted to strengthen staff's proposed Heritage Preservation ordinance change. I succeeded in more specifically defining the concept of "destruction." However, I was unable to convince my colleagues to support an amendment I had planned to bring that would have required all demolition permit applicants to inform appropriate neighborhood group(s) and Council Member(s). This was disappointing, but in the end I supported the amended ordinance in part because of other enhanced public hearing notifications and other clarifications that close some gaps and enhance our ability to preserve historic and potentially historic resources. Additional administrative changes (not in ordinance) that call for the distribution of weekly reports of Zoning and Historic Preservation Applications will keep neighbors and neighborhood groups better informed about demolitions. I will watch carefully to see if this process meets neighborhoods' needs. If it doesn't, I will explore ways to require this in ordinance.
- 3) Responding to a new statute, the City's Regulatory Services department has put in place a new policy that will require all single family dwellings that are relative homesteaded to obtain a rental license. Affected property owners are being provided with a rental license application and instructions for how to submit the application and fee to Housing Inspection Services. The affected properties are not subject to the \$1,000 fee for conversion of a property from owner-occupied to rental. I am supportive of this move, as relative homesteaded properties have been highlighted as a major issue for many U-area neighborhoods. Because these houses have been rented without a license, they have been significantly harder to control.
 - 4) I am supportive of part of the ordinance brought forward by Council Member Hofstede, which would ban upholstered furniture on yards. However, for a number of reasons I cannot support the more far-reaching portion of the ordinance which would ban all upholstered furniture "not manufactured for outside use" from porches that are not completely enclosed. I believe that public safety benefits when people spend time on their porches, and would hate to put something in place that would discourage this positive behavior. I also have concerns that this ordinance is redundant – couches on porches that are moldy, rotting, or habitat for wildlife are already prohibited. The evidence I have seen makes clear that couches on porches are not a significant fire risk. I am supportive, in general, of reusing existing manufactured goods as long as possible, rather than putting them into the waste stream. I am also concerned about the economic justice of this proposal, which would allow only those who can afford specifically-manufactured outdoor furniture to enjoy their porches. Lastly, I am uncomfortable telling people they can't do things that are not, in themselves, harmful. For these reasons, I will not be supporting the ordinance as written, but only the portion regarding upholstered furniture on yards.

- 5) The University has had a bill introduced at the Legislature (House File 1536) that would give them the power to make ordinances on any subject, covering all University owned and controlled land. The U's contention is that this will make it easier for them to craft consistent policies (with real consequences) for tailgating on U-owned parking lots, including some on the West Bank and in Prospect Park. City staff and I have some significant concerns about this proposal, and have been working with the University to see if there is any way to narrow either the geographic or subject matter scope of the proposed powers in order to win the City's support. I have also committed to work with University staff to explore possible changes to City ordinances that improve regulation of tailgating. You can read a University policy on tailgating here: policy.umn.edu/groups/ppd/documents/policy/tailgating_pol.cfm.
- 6) The Alliance's accomplishments were shared at a legislative Senate hearing on March 25th, and will be presented to the House in early April. Major accomplishments include a Homeownership Preservation Program that has preserved at least 22 homes for long-term owner-occupancy, a Homebuyer Incentive Program that will attract at least 15 new homebuyers to the University District, a website featuring the benefits of living in the University District at www.livenearyourwork.org, and a start on commercial district streetscape improvements in Cedar Riverside. The full University District Alliance Progress Report 2007 - 2009 is on the web at www.community.umn.edu/alliance.
- 7) Council Member Schiff and I have convinced our colleagues to direct the Police Department (MPD) to return to us in July with a report on how the MPD's Policy and Procedure Manual is changed, and how the process could include more input from Council Members, the Mayor's Office, the Civilian Review Authority and the public. We are concerned about some instances of policies having been changed in ways that we believe are bad for the City. One major example is that the Taser policy which the Council directed the Police Department to put in place in 2006 was changed the next year, without the CRA or City Council being consulted or informed, to allow much more flexible use of Tasers than originally allowed. Given the high-profile Taser death on the North Side last year, we are concerned that this policy change may be implicated. The purpose of the report in July is to start a discussion about what level of input and notification people outside of MPD should have when decisions like these are being made. I am extremely pleased that we're moving forward on this.
- 8) Council Member Ostrow's proposals to amend the Charter, including the elimination of the Park Board and Board of Estimate and Taxation, and the creation of a new City Administrator, will be discussed at four open meetings organized by the Charter Commission: Thursday, April 23 at Minnesota Transitions School (Board Room), 2872 26th Ave S; Tuesday, April 28, at North Regional Library, 1315 Lowry Ave N; Thursday, April 30 at Northeast Library, 2200 Central Ave NE; and Thursday, May 7 at St. Joan of Arc Church (lower level), 4500 Clinton Ave S. All meetings will take place from 6:30-8pm. If you have any opinions on these proposed amendments, I encourage you to attend one or more of these meetings and make your voice heard.
- 9) The Council is scheduled to vote on a new Park Dedication Fee ordinance on April 10. If passed, it would require developers to either dedicate land near their development site for public open space or to pay a Park Dedication Fee. State law requires that the same ordinance be adopted by the City Council and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. I am very supportive of this effort and am working for a fair compromise that will give us this tool (that is already in place in St. Paul and many suburban communities) to get needed funds to create new park space and make capital improvements to existing parks close to new developments. One amendment I am supporting is to delay its start date one year, to January 2011.
- 10) The City has also partnered again with Tree Trust to offer trees to residents for only \$25. If you're interested, you should visit www.treetrust.org/orderhere soon: there are only 1,000 trees being offered, and last year they went very quickly.
- 11) The City is launching a new citywide program designed to reduce domestic violence. Officers who arrive at a misdemeanor domestic violence call will now do more investigative work at the scene, giving prosecutors more information to prosecute a case. These new strategies have been successful in increasing the conviction rate of misdemeanor domestic violence-related cases from 54% to 76% in the 5th Precinct. I am very supportive of this program, which offers the opportunity to interrupt the cycle of violence.
- 12) Just a reminder: applications for the Climate Change Micro Grants of up to \$1,500 are due by 4pm on April 16, and applications for the Climate Change Innovation Grants of up to \$10,000 are due by 4pm on April 20. See here for more information: www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability/ClimateChangeGrants2009.asp.
- 13) There are openings on the Minneapolis Workforce Council (closes 5/8), Public Health Advisory Committee (closes 4/10) and Rental Dwelling License Board of Appeals (closes 4/24). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.