

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to the Prospect Park East River Road Neighborhood, 1-28-08

Cam's next Prospect Park Office Hours:
Pratt School, February 19, 9:30-11am

Items:

- 1) Central Corridor
- 2) University District Partnership Alliance
- 3) Phthalates
- 4) Comprehensive Plan
- 5) Dangerous Animals
- 6) Civil Rights Foreclosure Investigation
- 7) Foreclosure Resolution
- 8) Major Solar Installation
- 9) Future of NRP
- 10) Community Engagement
- 11) Disparity Study
- 12) 2008 Legislative Agenda
- 13) 2008 Budget
- 14) Openings on Boards and Commissions

- 1) The Central Corridor project is moving quickly, with a major decision of the Management Committee scheduled for February 27. The Met Council is holding Listening Sessions, the closest to Prospect Park being **Wednesday, February 6, Noon-2:00 pm, Weisman Museum, 333 East River Road**. The University is also sponsoring a meeting **Tuesday, January 29, 5-6:30 pm, McNamara Alumni Center, Suite 200, in the Laukka Conference Room 200 Oak Street SE**. Major decisions yet to be made include the east bank tunnel.
- 2) On December 19 the University Area Neighborhood Alliance elected two co-chairs: Dick Poppele, Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association President, and Karen Himle, Vice President for University Relations. We also established four work teams. I will be leading up, and convening meetings for, the Demonstration Project(s) work team. This process has enormous potential to transform the relationships between the neighborhoods, the University and the City to make them more effective, positive, and collaborative.
- 3) I encourage residents to review the new draft of the Comprehensive Plan that is available in public libraries and at www.minneapolisplan.info. You can submit comments at www.minneapolisplan.info, or send an email to lanupdate@ci.minneapolis.mn.us or written comments to: Haila Maze, Senior City Planner, CPED, 350 South 5th St., Rm 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415.
- 4) Earlier this month, I successfully prevented a new proposed Dangerous Animals ordinance from becoming overly draconian. The original proposal included new provisions empowering staff to declare pets potentially dangerous for behaviors that "constitute a physical threat" or require someone to take "defensive action." I successfully moved to create exemptions for these vague behaviors on an animal's owner's property. The Council also successfully narrowed down language that would have allowed Animal Control officers to declare an animal potentially dangerous if it has a "known disposition" to attack. Earlier, I proposed a change in committee, narrowing a blanket prohibition on ex-felons owning large dogs to **violent** felons, within 10 years of the end of their sentence. Altogether, I believe that these changes will allow the proposal to address truly dangerous dogs, while not leading to an increase in innocent dogs being declared dangerous.
 - 5) At my urging and the request of Minnesota ACORN, the City's Civil Rights Department is working with the Institute on Race and Poverty, looking into data on possible discriminatory loan and foreclosure practices by major lenders and loan servicers in Minneapolis.
 - 6) I cosponsored a resolution calling for the largest lenders and loan servicers to voluntarily freeze foreclosure activity in Minneapolis for three months, by allowing borrowers to refinance to lower interest rates, freeze adjustable rate mortgages, and other constructive actions. I hope that the industry will listen.

- 7) The City has been selected to receive a \$2 million grant to build a 600 kilowatt solar installation on top of our Currie Maintenance Facility. This is bigger than any existing solar project in the upper Midwest. The City will lease space on top of our facility to a third-party solar developer, and enter into a power purchase agreement with the solar developer, paying a little more than we do per kilowatt-hour off of the normal Xcel grid. This will generate enough energy to power about 80 single-family homes.
- 8) I am looking into possible City actions regarding children's products containing Bisphenol-A and certain phthalates, in order to build momentum for possible future statewide and nationwide bans. There is a range of options the City could pursue towards the long term goal of eliminating these toxins from the environment, including, but not limited to: passing a resolution against these toxins; calling for the legislature to ban them and retailers to voluntarily phase them out; banning these toxins in certain products (as San Francisco has done); banning these toxins in certain products pending statewide action or at some point in the future; requiring labeling of products containing these toxins. I have asked the Citizen's Environmental Advisory Committee and Public Health Advisory Committee to provide us with input on these options and the broader issues surrounding these chemicals.
- 9) Last month the Council took some promising steps forward for the future of Minneapolis neighborhoods. A new report, called Framework for the Future, recommends that 2 million dollars a year be set aside to assist neighborhood organizations cover basic administrative costs, that a Neighborhood Investment Fund be established to fund discretionary spending, that a resident-controlled, neighborhood organization-elected governance board be created to oversee the funds, and that the City create a division of Community Involvement to better support community participation efforts. I successfully amended the action to require that all neighborhood group presidents and all City advisory boards and commissions receive a copy of the report, as well as the Community Engagement Task Force's recommendations for review and input. As part of this process, the City will be holding informational sessions, the next being **Monday, February 4, 12-1:30pm**, in **City Hall room 319**. Neighborhood groups are also being encouraged to consider the "Framework" and submit formal comments and feedback before **March 17**. Community input will be presented to the Minneapolis City Council Committee of the Whole, tentatively scheduled for April 3, 2008. Please submit comments one of three ways: 1) **Email** to Community.Engagement@ci.minneapolis.mn.us; 2) **Mail** to: Jennifer Lastoka Community Engagement Coordinator 350 S. 5th St. – Room 301M City Hall Minneapolis, MN 55415; 3) **Fax** to: (612) 673-2011 (Attention: Jennifer Lastoka). See <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/communityengagement.asp> for more.
- 10) On December 7, 2007, the City Council adopted the [Core Principles of Community Engagement](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/CorePrinciples_CE.asp) (http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/CorePrinciples_CE.asp) as recommended by the Community Engagement Task Force. This was one of 36 recommendations. It also recommended that each neighborhood organization also adopts them. It will be important that neighborhood organizations and others review and comment on the recommendations of the Community Engagement Task Force as well as the future NRP framework group in the first quarter of 2008.
- 11) I am pleased that the City is moving ahead with a Disparity Study. The City of Minneapolis' Small and Underutilized Business (SUB) Program promotes opportunities for businesses owned by women and minority citizens. The disparity study will give us the information we need to know if there are disparities in the marketplace and if our affirmative efforts to hire and contract with underutilized businesses are warranted. Twelve years have passed since the last City of Minneapolis disparity study was completed.
- 12) The Council's 2008 legislative agenda includes a request for \$6.85 million for the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial area and the following proposals I put forward: support for measures to stop the flow of handguns to youth, legislative action to eliminate tax incentives that encourage the conversion of single family housing to rental property, allowing organic waste to be mixed with yard waste for municipal collection, legislation adopting rules for ranked choice voting, and consideration of an elected Metropolitan Council.
- 13) On December 12th the City Council approved a budget for 2008 The City Council voted 12-1 in favor of a \$1.4 billion city budget that includes \$200 million in public safety programs, funds the largest police force in more than five years and addresses root causes of crime with funding to prevent youth violence and build economic opportunity. It includes a 1.8 million decrease in LGA (Local Government Aid), an increase of 8% to the property tax levy, the removal of the 2% wage cap for employees and cuts to the Public Works and Regulatory Services department. Other highlights include: \$300,000 to hire 4 new 911 operators, \$150,000 for community micro-grants to prevent gang graffiti, \$100,000 to fund the Youth Violence Prevention Committee Implementation plan, \$100,000 to fund the next round of climate change micro grants.
- 14) There are openings on the Zoning Board of Adjustment (closes 2/1/2008). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us