

**News from Cam Gordon**  
**Council Member, Second Ward**  
**October 2008**

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**Community Engagement & NRP.** In September the Council voted to establish a new City department, the Neighborhood and Community Relations Department, and a new City commission, the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission. These lay the foundation for what will likely be a similar, but significantly different, neighborhood revitalization program and a potentially much more effective City community engagement system in the future.

**The Neighborhood and Community Relations Department** will function under the supervision of the City Coordinator and is intended to both serve residents directly and support all other City departments in their work to engage the community. It will be charged with strengthening our City's quality of life through vigorous community participation, promoting resident involvement in neighborhood and community organizations, and supporting clearly defined links between the City, City services and neighborhood and community organizations.

**The Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission** will provide overall direction to a next phase of the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and be responsible for the review of neighborhood plans and recommendation of their approval to the City Council. It will also make recommendations on, and monitor the distribution and use of the basic Citizen Participation Services funds, and the new Neighborhood Investment Fund. It will also help guide and improve all aspects of community involvement and civic participation in the City and carry forward the work Community Engagement Task Forces recommendations started last year. The Commission will be made up of at least 16 city residents. Eight of these will be selected by the City's officially recognized neighborhood organizations through a process that is yet to be defined by those officially recognized neighborhood organizations. Seven will be appointed by the City and one by the Park Board. I supported both of these actions, after I was able to grant the Commission, modeled on the existing Planning Commission, significantly more power than the proposed advisory board it replaced and secure a place on it for a Park and Recreation Board appointee. I was also successful in amending the resolution to require that all meetings to be open to the public, televised (when possible), and subject to the requirements of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law. However, I was unable to convince a majority of Council Members to support giving the Commission the power to appoint (with Council approval) the Director of the new department, the authority to set neighborhood boundaries and hear neighborhood grievances. Even with these setbacks, however, I think this is an important step forward for the City. Through these actions and the identification of a funding source for a new Neighborhood Investment Fund that will be used by neighborhoods to implement their plans, the Council has made clear that support for neighborhood groups, both in terms of administrative funding and project-based dollars, is an essential part of our City. Now I will be working to make sure that the new commission is effective; that the new department improves civic participation, and that both support, empower and improve the ability of neighborhood organizations to improve their communities. For this to happen, there will need to be sufficient funds to make sure that neighborhood-driven planning is as inclusive, inspiring, accountable and effective as possible. We still have a great deal of work to do to build trusting relationships of mutual respect and improve how we work as a city government in partnership with all residents, neighborhood groups and other community stakeholders to make this a better City for everyone.

**Another Tragedy on the West Bank.** On September 22, Ahmednu Ali was shot near 420 15<sup>th</sup> Ave S outside Riverside Plaza and the Brian Coyle Center in Cedar Riverside. The 20-year-old Augsburg College student had just finished his first day as an intern for the Center. On Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>, Minneapolis police arrested a 16 year-old male in connection with this shooting. This is the third tragic homicide of a young person in the neighborhood this year. In response to this we have pushed even harder to add to our previous efforts to enhance public safety in the area. The

First Precinct Commander has committed to add Night Beat cops on the West Bank. We are trying to extend this coverage to seven days a week, and are in the process of identifying officers who would be the "right fit." Working with the Commander I also want to ensure the officers are proactive in attending meetings, reaching out to businesses and residents. In the meantime, we have added extra police presence to be assigned specifically near Brian Coyle from 4pm until midnight daily. I am exploring ways to work with the larger community to support the call from the Brian Coyle Center, Augsburg and the Somali Confederation of Minnesota for more security cameras outside, hiring a security officer or police liaison from 5-10pm nightly, working to increase police presence in Currie Park and surrounding streets and hiring two Somali outreach workers focused on connecting with Somali young adults. I am also working to finalize the agreement with Sherman Associates for them to provide \$20,000 for additional police officers for next year. I am actively exploring making the West Bank one of the City's target neighborhoods for our Youth Violence Prevention work and support efforts, spearheaded by the Cedar Riverside Partnership to duplicate a model developed downtown that would make the entire neighborhood a SafeZone and include better coordination and communication of Public safety efforts from the institutions, large property owners, MPHA and the City. It is not at this time, because when the plan was drafted there had been no homicides on the West Bank in years. I believe it is time to reevaluate this, given the tragic year we've had.

**Ranked Choice Voting.** The Minneapolis Elections Director has recommended that the City implement ranked choice voting in the 2009 municipal election, by using a combination of our existing machines and a hand count. This recommendation came at the same time she rejected both proposals to machine-count the vote next year. I'm thrilled by this historic opportunity, and I believe that the hand count will be an open, transparent celebration of democracy. There will likely be a delay on reporting final results for some close races, but in my opinion this is more than offset by the benefits of not paying for new equipment, not holding the costly, low-turnout nonpartisan primary, and implementing ranked choice voting in a timely manner – responding to the more than 65% of Minneapolis residents who voted for the IRV charter amendment in 2006. We should keep in mind that the lawsuit against the City has not yet been resolved. It is my understanding that the only ways RCV implementation could be delayed now is if the City Council voted to delay it, despite the staff recommendation, or if it is determined to be unconstitutional or preempted by the courts. I believe that these are both unlikely to occur.

**Low-Heat / No-Heat Ordinance in Effect.** Starting October 1, landlords in Minneapolis are required to keep interior temperatures at 68 degrees or above. If you're a renter, and your unit is cooler than 68 degrees, you can call 311 and make a complaint to housing inspections. My office spearheaded the effort to get this new ordinance passed, replacing the old, complicated external-temperature formula that was so difficult for our staff to effectively enforce.

**RNC.** Last month, the Public Safety & Regulatory Services committee rejected my attempt to get more information included in the MPD's "After Action Review" of events related to RNC. I was especially interested to know about how well our officers followed the July 25th Police Policies Resolution, even when in St. Paul. I also wanted information on the preemptive raids that occurred the Saturday before the convention, and as much information as possible about the actions of other levels of law enforcement, for instance the FBI and Secret Service. I am disappointed that my colleagues have declined to ask for this information, but I will continue to do so nonetheless. This item will come back to the PS&RS committee in October.

**University District Moratorium.** The Zoning and Planning committee has unanimously approved keeping in place the University District moratorium on demolition and new construction of 1-4 unit residential properties. This action, which the committee took despite hearing some complaints from area developers, will give our staff and District residents some breathing space to work on a U District zoning and land use study. Many thanks to everyone who sent in letters and came down to listen and speak in support of this interim moratorium.

**Environmentally-Friendly Purchasing.** A resolution establishing the City's first-ever Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy has passed the Health, Energy and Environment. I have championed this issue since being elected and was very supportive of this action, which has gained the support of City departments through the Environmental Coordinating Team, and from the Citizen's Environmental Advisory Committee. The policy represents a serious step forward on many different fronts. For example, the City will begin purchasing 100% post-consumer copier paper for all of our regular copying needs. I attempted to strengthen the policy in two important ways – by covering products not specifically called out in the policy and by adding an annual report back to Council – but lost both votes on narrow margins. I will continue to work to make this policy as strong and measurable as possible.

**Minneapolis Recognized as Sustainability Leader.** We've been named one of the most environmentally-friendly cities in the U.S. by [SustainLane.com](http://SustainLane.com), an online guide to sustainable living. Minneapolis ranked **#7**, moving up from #10 in 2005, among the 50 most populous cities in the nation. We were helped by high rankings in availability of local food and agriculture (#1), city innovation (#6) and green economy (#7). The city was referred to as a "Midwestern jewel of a city" and was also recognized for the climate change grants that the City awards to groups for funding projects aimed at tackling global warming. To learn more about Minneapolis' sustainability efforts, visit [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability).

Recently, the City unveiled a new **Green Building web page**. To see it, go here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/mdr/GreenBuildingOptionsChecklist.asp>. This page is accessed from the Minneapolis Development Review homepage, and contains information and links to encourage our customers to use more environmentally sustainable building practices, such as renewable energy, reused and recycled materials, energy efficiency and stormwater management. This is a key component of the City's Green Building Initiative, and I commend Development Review for completing this great website - and for sharing the same information with people at the MDR counter day after day.

**Bike Mode Share Increases Dramatically.** According to newly-released census information, Minneapolis is closing in on Portland in terms of bicycle mode share. Between 2006 and 2007, we moved from 2.5% to 3.8% bike commuter mode share (from 4,840 to 7,200 riders per day), an increase of almost 50%, bigger than any other city. Portland, on the other hand, went from 4.2% to 3.9%. We are within .1% of being the number one large city in the country for bicycling. With our ongoing investments in both bike infrastructure and education, I'm confident that we'll continue to improve on this number in the coming years.

**New Bicycle Route Finder.** U of M PhD students have developed a great new bike route finder: [cyclopath.org](http://cyclopath.org). Basically, it works just like the route finders on mapquest and google, but for cyclists. Excitingly for less-experienced cyclists, you can tailor the route to your comfort level by indicating whether bike-friendliness or speed is more important to you. This tool, if it gets much use, can help aggregate the wisdom of the twin cities bicycle community and make it available to anyone, and the more people use it, the more successful it will be. I can see this being a great help to visitors, first time riders and longtime bike commuters alike.

**Hennepin Two-Way Public Meeting.** A public meeting will be held next **Wednesday, October 8**, 5-6pm at Central Library to discuss the upcoming conversion of Hennepin Ave and 1<sup>st</sup> Ave N from one-way to two-way. This discussion will focus primarily on options for retaining the bike lane and options for providing for left turns. I'm very interested in increasing the safety of this corridor (one of the most-used bike corridors in the state). I am very resistant to placing the bike lanes in the middle of the road on Hennepin, one of the options being explored. I'll would like to see some of the treatments that the Council directed staff to explore when we passed the Downtown Transportation Action Plan, including traffic lights with bike signalization. There is an abundance of great ideas we can look at, including the [Copenhagen Model](#).

**Lead Work Group Receives Award.** The joint Mpls/Hennepin Lead Poisoning Prevention Work Group, on which I serve with CM Glidden, has won the 2008 Community Health Service award.

The Work Group exists to establish and monitor plans, align efforts and build capacity for eliminating lead poisoning. The Work Group has collaborated to help reduce childhood lead poisoning in Hennepin County by over 50% since the group's inception in 2002. In 2001, 6% of children under six who were screened had elevated blood lead levels, while in 2006 this figure had fallen to 2%. During the same period, we screened more kids: 5,487 more in 2006 than in 2001.

**Centerpoint Energy Assistance Meetings.** Natural gas utility CenterPoint Energy will be holding a meeting in the Second Ward to give residents information about natural gas bill payment assistance: **October 14, 5-8pm** at Van Cleve Park. Community Action will help folks complete their applications, and CenterPoint Energy will meet to discuss payment plan options. If you attend, please bring your most recent CenterPoint Energy bill and household income verification, which are both required to complete energy assistance applications. CenterPoint also held a similar meeting on October 1 at the Matthews Center. If you can't attend this meeting and need help, call 612-372-4680.

**Personal Safety Workshop.** The Community Crime Prevention division of the Minneapolis Police Department is hosting a personal safety workshop on Thursday, October 16, 7-9pm at Washburn High Auditorium, 201 W 49th St. The workshop will be led by Mary Brandl, a self defense expert. If you have questions, please call Crime Prevention Specialist Amy Lavender at 612-673-5407 or [amy.lavender@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:amy.lavender@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).

**New Parking Standards.** City Planning staff has been working for some time on text amendments for the zoning code dealing with off-street parking requirements. They've done extensive research into best practices in other cities and come up with a general direction for the revision. It calls for more flexible and context-sensitive minimum parking requirements, more widespread use of bicycle parking requirements, and the first-ever set of limits on the amount of automobile parking that can be provided. (It's important to note that the ongoing University District study will also potentially create unique parking rules for the U District neighborhoods, which would trump this citywide change.) Planning staff has scheduled an opportunity for community input: **Thursday, October 16, 6:30-8:30pm**, Martin Luther King Recreation Center multi-purpose room, 4055 Nicollet Ave.

**Gang Prevention.** The City has received a grant of \$200,000 from the US Department of Justice to prevent gang involvement among youth ages 13-17. One of the more exciting aspects of this grant is that the funded position will be within the department of Health and Family Support, not in law enforcement. I see this as one of the first examples of the ongoing youth violence prevention work I have been doing bearing fruit.

**Proposed New Noise Ordinance.** Environmental Management staff is working on a new noise ordinance. The old City ordinance was found unconstitutionally vague, and staff has been enforcing the state noise statute, which significantly reduces our capacity to respond to complaints. The proposed new code would use a "C weighting" rather than an "A weighting," allowing us to more effectively control bass-heavy noise from bars. Other important changes include the fact that the ordinance will cover indoor spaces (the state code only applies to noise heard outdoors) and that it will be context-specific. Rather than setting a certain maximum level of noise, violations will be based on the difference between the ambient sound level and the noise from the bar in question. I'm strongly supportive of these changes, in principle, and I plan to introduce this ordinance change on October 11.

**Proposed New Food Ordinances.** The Department of Health and Family Support is working to bring forward two new food ordinances. The first would require all restaurants with fifteen or more locations nationwide to conspicuously label the caloric content of each menu item. The second would phase out trans fats in all Minneapolis restaurants. Trans fats are artificially

saturated (or "hydrogenated") fats that are linked in numerous studies to increases in heart disease. Both caloric content and trans fats have major impacts on the obesity epidemic, which increases the costs of health care and decreases quality of life for tens of thousands of Minneapolitans. A number of cities, counties and states across the country have enacted calorie labeling and/or trans fat bans, and a legal challenge to the New York law has been decided in the city's favor at two judicial levels. I strongly support these proposed ordinances, and will work hard to get them passed.

**Central Corridor.** City staff continue to work with the University and the County on the design for the Washington Avenue transit and pedestrian mall. Outstanding issues include whether buses and emergency vehicles should operate on the train tracks. Metro Transit operations folks and City Fire Department and Public Works staff believe this is a very bad idea, as accidents or breakdowns could produce significant LRT delays, fire trucks might not be able to make it through the corridor at acceptable speeds, and packed snow and ice could cause train derailments. They are pushing for a separate lane to be shared by buses, emergency vehicles, and bicycles. The other main issue regards a possible "amenity zone" in the middle of the street, which could include benches, tables, and greenery, at the expense of sidewalk space on the sides of the street. This idea is neither supported nor strongly opposed by City staff, and I have likewise taken no position on it.

**Rental Property Owner Workshop.** MPD and Inspections are hosting a workshop for landlords on Thursday, October 23, 5-9pm, at St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, 3450 Irving Ave S. Pre-registration is required. The cost is **\$20 if registered by Oct. 16**; \$30 thereafter. The fee covers a manual and other materials, a DVD on Housing Court and dinner. The workshop includes useful info on: property management, dealing with tenant behavior issues, tenant screening, effective leases, housing court, working with the MPD and Inspections, and much more. For more details and a registration form, go to: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/safe/workshops.asp>, or you can e-mail [ccpsafe@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:ccpsafe@ci.minneapolis.mn.us) or leave a message at 612-673-2812.

**Household Hazardous Waste Facility Meeting.** Along with Council Member Paul Ostrow, I am hosting an informational meeting about the possible household hazardous waste facility on Industrial Boulevard, on **Thursday, October 23**, at 6:30pm at Van Cleve Park. Staff from Minneapolis Public Works and Hennepin County Environmental Services plan to attend to provide information, answer questions, and hear any concerns. The County has produced an informational video, which you can find here: [http://hennepinmn.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish\\_id=11](http://hennepinmn.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?publish_id=11). They are also offering a bus tour of the existing similar facility in Bloomington, for anyone interested.

**Arsenic Cleanup Level Chosen.** The EPA has decided on their cleanup level for the South Minneapolis Arsenic Contamination site. They plan to remove soil from yards that have an arsenic level of 25 parts per million (ppm) or above to a depth of one foot, and removal of all deeper soil in yards that contain 95ppm or more. This amounts to 488 yards, including the 77 yards that were already slated for cleanup due to contamination above 95ppm. The cleanup standard EPA has chosen is somewhat disappointing to me. I joined Environmental Justice Advocates of Minnesota (EJAM) and others in calling for a lower cleanup standard. The literature on arsenic suggests that contamination in the range of 10ppm can be dangerous, especially for children, and the baseline arsenic content in Minneapolis soil is certainly no greater than 17. Still, it is good that this cleanup will be proceeding. EPA believes the work will take about four years. At the time that it is completed, I would support repealing the tenant notification ordinance I moved through the Council in 2006.

**Malcolm Reconstruction Postponed.** Public Works staff have put off reconstructing Malcolm Ave SE until next spring, due to a delay in Xcel doing the utility work required to allow our crews to start work.

**Grandma's Redevelopment.** Alatus Partners has come before the City's Development Review for their redevelopment project at the old Grandma's site on the West Bank. My office has encouraged the developer to work with the West Bank Community Coalition.

**Bystrom Site.** The process of spurring redevelopment in the Franklin LRT Station area has reached a critical juncture. The City's Community Development committee has approved an application for the Franklin Station Project to the Metropolitan Council for \$500,000 from the Land Acquisition for Affordable New Development (LAAND) Program. This grant request is for acquisition of the Bystrom Brothers Site, a 4-acre parcel near the station. Public Works is also moving forward on planning a new connection between Minnehaha and Cedar along a re-routed 22nd Street. Seward Redesign has scheduled a series of community meetings, led by City Desk Architects and the Franklin Planning Steering Committee: **October 8th**, 4:30-6:30pm, at the SE corner of Minnehaha & 22nd Street, **October 14th**, 6:30-8:00pm at Matthews Center, **October 22nd**, 5:30-6:30pm at Seward Redesign (2619 Franklin Avenue), **October 29th**, 5:30-6:30pm at Seward Redesign, **November 11th**, 6:30 - 8:00pm at Matthews Center, and November 19th, 5:30-6:30pm at Seward Redesign.

**Openings on Boards and Commissions.** There are openings on the Civilian Police Review Authority (closes 10/17/08), Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities (closes 10/17/08), Public Health Advisory Committee (closes 10/17/08), Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Vacancy (closes 10/17/08), and Youth Violence Prevention Executive Committee (closes 10/31/08). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email [cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us).

Please feel free to contact me and my office anytime if you have any questions or concerns. We welcome your thoughts and feedback on any of these issues and my positions.

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

Cam Gordon  
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