

News from Cam Gordon
Council Member, Second Ward
January 2008

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/ward2/>

Youth Violence Prevention Plan. The work that started with the resolution I introduced last November recognizing youth violence as a public health problem takes a big step forward this month. The Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee, created as part of the resolution, will present its final recommendations at a Public Hearing of the Health, Energy and Environment Committee on Monday January 7th (1:30 pm). I am hopeful that the recommendations will be approved by the Committee and forwarded for Council approval on January 18th. I am proud of the work we have done so far and excited about seeing our plan moved forward. For more information join my January Roundtable and see:

http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/YouthViolencePrevention_home.asp

January Roundtable: Minneapolis' Youth Violence Prevention Plan. Please join me and others for a roundtable discussion on the new Youth Violence Prevention Plan, **Tuesday January 22, 7-9pm**.at Matthews Center, 24th St. E and 28th Ave. S,

NRP and Civic Participation. Last month the Council took some promising steps forward for the future of Minneapolis neighborhoods and the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. There appears to be growing support for three key positions I have been advocating for: administrative funding for neighborhood groups; better City support and coordination of its community engagement efforts; and discretionary funding for neighborhood groups. This growing (and, to be honest, pleasantly surprising) consensus means that the Council is trying to move forward with a continuation of NRP (or an equivalent program) past 2009. The report, called Framework for the Future, recommends, among other things, 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 coordinate and 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 their review and input. See <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/communityengagement.asp> for more.

Community Engagement Report. On December 7, 2007, the City Council voted unanimously to adopt the Core Principles of Community Engagement (http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/communications/CorePrinciples_CE.asp) as recommended by the Community Engagement Task Force. This was one of 36 recommendations that the Task Force presented in November. It also recommends that each neighborhood organizations also adopt them. It will be very 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. There is still a great deal of work to do and your continued involvement will be critical to our success. One crucial and difficult task ahead will be finding and dedicating enough funding to keep neighborhood organizations going strong and to make the Neighborhood Investment Fund effective. For more information see http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2007-meetings/20071116/Docs/CETFRReport_FINAL_20071113.pdf

Major Solar Installation. 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. You can read more about this on my blog here: <http://secondward.blogspot.com>.

Dangerous Animal Ordinance. Some of my colleagues have proposed a new ordinance that would severely crack down on dog owners in Minneapolis. While I appreciate the intent to better protect people from dangerous dogs, I am concerned that this amendment goes to far and may lead to the destruction of harmless animals. Among their proposed changes, they would empower staff to:

- impound unlicensed pets
- declare pets "potentially dangerous" for causing a person to take a "defensive action," offering a "physical threat" or having a "known propensity or tendency" to be dangerous.
- impound pets whose owners possesses items that could be used to train a dog to fight
- require owners of "dangerous animals" to get a \$300,000 insurance policy
- prohibiting felons from having certain kinds of dogs

Taken together, I believe that these proposals would give staff latitude and flexibility to declare dangerous or potentially dangerous basically any animal about which there is a complaint. I fear that this will inevitably lead to a radical increase in the number of animals "destroyed." Last month, I moved to change or delete all of the above. I failed to change the committee's mind on point one, but succeeded in softening part five, making it apply only to **violent** felons and making the prohibition last for only ten years after they complete their sentence. I also proposed a change to the toothless prohibition against ownership of dog "weaponizing" paraphernalia, to make it a misdemeanor. This matter will come back before the PS&RS committee on January 9. You can read more about my position on this on my blog.

Library Merger. I was the only Council Member to vote against the merger of the Minneapolis Public Library System with the Hennepin County library system. I have serious concerns about transferring the jobs, land, buildings and other assets that belong to Minneapolis residents without a better governance structure for the a new library board and without better protections for recapturing assets should they be sold by the county in the future. More importantly, I believe that major changes to our charter and decisions like this about the structure of government should go before the voters. On the positive side the Southeast, Roosevelt and Webber libraries will be reopening for limited hours starting January 12 and plans for a renovated (and likely relocated) Southeast Library will continue.

City Council Organization. On January 2 the City Council unanimously voting to continue with the 2005-07 leadership and committee assignments for another two years. Council member Johnson will remain Council president. My major committee assignments will remain as follows: Executive Committee, Community Development, Health, Energy and Environment (Vice Chair), Public Safety and Regulatory Services, and Zoning and Planning Committee. I also serve on the following: the Joint City County Lead Task Force, the Minneapolis/St. Paul Family Housing Finance board, the 2008 Convention Free Speech Work Group (alternate), the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA) Operating Committee, the Youth Violence Prevention Steering Committee and the Red Rock Corridor Commission.

Pthalates. I am looking into a City ban of children's products containing Bisphenol-A and certain phthalates, as San Francisco has done, 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; banning these toxins in certain products pending statewide action or at some point in the future; requiring labeling of products containing these toxins. It almost goes without saying, but for legal and practical reasons, the City's capacity to enact a full ban may well be limited. 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.

University Neighborhood Alliance. On December 19 the University Area Neighborhood Alliance met and 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. Here is a list of the teams and members:

- Demonstration Project(s) Work Team: Cam Gordon, Marilyn Burns, Doris Wickstrom, Kris Nelson, Mike Christenson, Melissa Bean, Jan Morlock.
- Early Start Initiatives Work Team: Wendy Menken, Kendre Turonie, Jan Morlock
- Resources and Partnerships Work Team: Arvonne Fraser, Karen Himle, Jan Morlock.
- Vision and Long Term Plan Work Team: Wendy Menken, Dick Gilyard, Richard (Fitz) Pfitzenreuter, Alex Fink, Jan Morlock.

This group has enormous potential to transform the relationships between the neighborhoods, the University and the City in more effective, positive, collaborative ways. I am look forward to the next steering committee meeting Thursday, January 24, and all the work ahead on this in 2008.

Civil Rights Disparity Study. 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. In order to offer preferences or incentives for using such businesses, the City is obligated to meet legal standards that establish a compelling governmental interest in support of this activity. 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.

Administrative Review. I have introduced subject matter of an ordinance to change the City's administrative review process for new housing developments under four units. I will be working with staff to raise the standards and provide more opportunity for neighborhood comment on these small developments that can have such a significant effect on their neighbors.

Lurking Repeal. I have introduced subject matter of an ordinance to repeal the City's outdated, discriminatory "lurking" ordinance. Unfortunately, in order to cobble together a coalition to get this done, I will also have to take steps to broaden the loitering ordinance.

Legislative Agenda. 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.

Department Heads. The Council has voted to reappoint Civil Rights Director Michael Jordan, CPED Director Mike Christensen, Health Commissioner Gretchen Musicant, Fire Chief Jim Clack, Public Works Director Steve Kotke, City Assessor Patrick Todd, and City Coordinator Steven Bosacker.

Great Streets. Cedar Riverside will receive \$60,000 in funding from the new Great Streets business district support program, in the form of one \$30,000 grant to the Cedar Riverside Business Association and one \$30,000 grant to the African Development Center. A cooperative application from Seward Neighborhood Group and Seward Redesign to help with Franklin Ave revitalization was also granted \$30,000.

Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC). The Council, with my support, has voted on reappointment of a new PHAC, which includes former Second Ward Council Member and Prospect Park stalwart Paul Zerby, who has ably chaired the committee.

West Bank Station Location. With the whole West Bank community working together – residents, businesses, the CDC and others – it appears that a station location and preliminary design has been found that will serve the neighborhood as well as the University. I am glad that it includes an elevator and stairs from the Cedar Avenue bridge, down to the station platform.

Cedar Riverside NRP. Congratulations to the West Bank community on approving such a clear and future focused Phase I NRP Plan, It passed through the Council in December and now 1.2 million dollars will be available for investment in the neighborhood.

West Bank School of Music. The Council has reaffirmed our resolution to sell the West Bank School of Music their building. The only unresolved issue is a legal dispute between the School and a neighboring business over access to their parking lot, which we hope will be resolved early in 2008.

Hard Times Café Reopens. I am delighted that the Hard Times reopened last weekend after being closed for four months. I wish them great success and look forward to eating there again and holding my open office hours in the ward there the first Tuesday of each month (from 9:30 - 11 AM). I know that the extended closing and renovations have resulted in a significant loss of income so a big boost in business in the weeks ahead would be greatly appreciated.

University Medical Center – Fairview Riverside Expansion. Plans for a new Children's Hospital on Riverside Avenue were approved by the Planning Commission in December. The street vacation at 7th St. and 24th Ave will be considered at the Zoning and Planning Committee and then full Council in January.

Acadia Café Coming to Cedar Riverside. The Acadia Café, a well-known bar, restaurant and music venue, will be moving from its current location at Nicollet and Franklin to the corner of Cedar and Riverside (one-time site of the Riverside Café). They are set to open in mid-late January.

2012 29th Ave S. The Council has voted to demolish the vacant, boarded building at 2012 29th Ave S. That parcel will become part of the Seward Coop expansion project.

Metro Petro. Due to delays in the Metro Petro project (at 2700 University Ave SE), they were unable to begin construction this year. I moved to extend the exemption for 2700 University from the 29th Street Station Pedestrian Oriented District until January 1, 2009, to allow this neighborhood-supported project to go forward.

Comprehensive Plan Update. The City Planning Department is completing a major update to the City's Comprehensive Plan that attempts to look ahead to what kind of City we envision being in 2030. To learn more or make comments go to www.minneapolisplan.info, or attend one of the following community meetings:

- North Regional Library, 1315 Lowry Avenue North, January 8, 5:30-7:30pm
- Lake Hiawatha Community Center, 2701 E. 44th Street, January 12, 10amnoon
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Rec. Center, 4055 Nicollet Avenue South, January 17, 7-9pm
- Mill City Museum, 704 S 2nd Street, January 28, 11am-1pm
- Eastside Neighborhood Services, 1700 2nd Street NE, January 29, 4-6pm

City Budget. 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 and the removal of the 2% wage cap for employees. 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
- \$75,000 to fund the Youth are Here buses of the Youth Coordinating Board
- \$75,000 to fund Youth Violence Prevention grants
- \$75,000 to help residents plant trees on private property
- \$100,000 to fund the next round of climate change micro grants

Openings on City Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Civilian Police Review Authority, Heritage Preservation Commission, Latino Advisory Committee to the Mayor and City Council, Minneapolis Telecommunications Network (MTN), Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC), Minneapolis Public Housing Authority Board of Commissioners, Senior Citizen Advisory Committee, Zoning Board of Adjustment. To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

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