

News from Cam Gordon

Council Member, Second Ward

May 2011

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

Tornado Strike. North Minneapolis was struck by a devastating storm on May 22. There were at least three tornado touchdowns in the metro area, killing one person in Minneapolis, injuring at least 30 others, knocking out power to thousands and leading to a curfew and school closings in north Minneapolis. A second person died while helping with clean up efforts. The Jordan neighborhood was hit the hardest with downed trees, snapped power lines, gas leaks and roofs torn off houses. Roads were blocked and over 200 people displaced by the storm stayed at an emergency shelter at the Northeast Armory. By Thursday most of the streets and alleys were cleared of debris. At that time representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the State Department of Public Safety, the Small Business Administration, and the City began going through tornado-damaged areas to assess the damage and determine whether the situation requires supplemental federal government assistance. Volunteers and residents have been working hard all work, mostly through the local housing organization Urban Homeworks. The City will coordinate a volunteer clean up day on Saturday, June 4 and has set up a Disaster Recovery Center at Fairview Park. The Minneapolis Foundation has established a fund, Minnesota Helps – North Minneapolis Recovery Fund, that will help with short and long-term housing and recovery related needs on the North Side. To make a donation by credit card, visit www.givemn.org or send checks to The Minneapolis Foundation, 80 South 8th Street, Suite 800, Minneapolis, MN, 55402. People can also donate to the local Red Cross at www.redcross.org.

Vikings Stadium. I have taken a clear position against the Minneapolis proposal for using City sales taxes to help fund a renovated Vikings Stadium at its current site. In this time of economic turmoil, shrinking support from the state, rising property taxes and likely cuts to essential services, I can not support spending \$190 million in public dollars on stadiums. I am especially concerned about the proposed extension of the downtown restaurant tax to Second Ward small businesses which, in my opinion, will not benefit in any tangible way from a new Vikings stadium. Read more on the reasoning behind this position on my blog.

The Minneapolis Neighborhood Environment Network. The Minneapolis Citizens' Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC), the official body tasked with advising City Hall on the environmental impacts of its policies has started an electronic newsletter to share environmental efforts and opportunities throughout Minneapolis. People can submit items and sign up to be added to the mailing list by sending an email to MinneapolisNEN@gmail.com.

Neighborhood Funding Fight at the Legislature. The fight between the City and neighborhood organizations that the Council majority started last December – over my strenuous objections – moved into the Legislature in May. Minneapolis Representative Phyllis Kahn and Senator Ken Kelash brought forward legislation to undo the Council's decision to take back millions of dollars in funding promised to neighborhoods under NRP. While the legislature failed to take action on this bill before adjourning, I was a little torn but disappointed the legislature was unable to intervene. While I generally do not support having the Legislature reach down and directly meddle in local affairs, the Council made the wrong decision in December, and NRP was a creation of the state legislature.

Minneapolis Parks Announce New Recreation Center Hours. 47 recreation centers in Minneapolis Parks will launch new hours beginning May 31. For more information on the new recreation center hours, see the news release and graphic on the MPRB website here: <http://www.minneapolisparcs.org/default.asp?PageID=52&prid=1509>.

Cyclist Killed in Ward 2. As you have likely heard, a young woman named Audrey Hull was hit and killed on her bicycle at the corner of 15th Ave SE and 4th St SE in late April. There is a very

clear pattern emerging: of the last six bicycle fatalities in Minneapolis, four were caused by large trucks making turns. My office has organized a meeting between members of Public Works, the Police Department, and the Attorney's Office to begin an interagency discussion about how best to address this deadly conflict between bicyclists and trucks. I also plan to hold community meetings to get ideas from cyclists, truck drivers and others about how to prevent future deaths.

Commercial Recycling Ordinance. The Commercial Recycling ordinance that I have been working on for some time is coming before the Council's Regulatory, Energy and Environment committee on Monday, **June 6th** at 1:30pm, in room 317 of City hall, 350 S 5th St. This ordinance will require all businesses and business property owners in Minneapolis to have recycling service or provide recycling service to their tenants. I believe that the time has come for us to move past thinking that recycling is optional, and shift to a shared expectation that recycling is simply the way we deal with waste.

Central Corridor Interim Parking. At the request of area residents and business owners I have identified a way to allow property owners to get "interim use permits" to create temporary parking lots to serve local business needs during the light rail construction. The permit would be approved by the City Council, through a public hearing at the Zoning & Planning Committee after a 10-day public notice period required. An interim use permit may be granted for a maximum of five years. If the City approves the permit for less than five years, it could require that the permit expire upon the Central Corridor light rail service opening to the public. Because of the temporary nature of the use, certain requirements that would normally apply to the use could be waived.

Nice Ride Bike Sharing Expands. This month Nice Ride Minnesota announced that they would be adding 40 new bike share stations in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Half of these will be along the Central Corridor Light Rail line and 4 more will be added in Ward 2 of Minneapolis. These stations, with 500 new bikes, will begin being installed in June. To track the status of these installations, check out the on-line map at www.niceridemn.org or see the plan at http://gallery.mailchimp.com/0ad851e0a85a7ab12a54f634c/files/expansion_map_05172011.pdf

Great Streets Grants. The West Bank Business Association has received \$30,000 in Great Streets funding to strengthen the business community in Cedar Riverside, for example by working on outreach on a proposed business improvement district. A coalition of three business associations representing areas impacted by the Central Corridor – Southeast Business Association, Stadium Village Association and the West Bank Business Association – have also received a \$30,000 Great Streets grant. They will be working to mitigate Central Corridor construction issues and improve marketing of the areas around the U to students and others. The Longfellow Community Council, Longfellow Business Association and League of Longfellow Artists has also been awarded a Great Streets grant to support Art in Vacant Storefronts, and an East Lake Street corridor assessment. There will be an Art on Lake Street Tour and a community meeting to present the corridor assessment next spring.

Pension Reform Bills. I was supportive of a proposed legislation that would merge the Minneapolis Police and Firefighters Relief Associations' pension programs into the statewide public employee's retirement program. The proposed agreement would have potentially provided property tax savings exceeding \$100 million over the next 20 years, including \$21 million next year. I am grateful to Representative Jim Davnie for authoring this but disappointed that the legislature did not pass it before it adjourned. Hopefully it will be considered and passed during the expected special session that could occur this summer.

The 2011 Resident Survey is now complete and the results are available. To view the results, please go to: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/results-oriented-minneapolis/survey2011.asp>

Disparity Forum. There will be a Community Forum on the Minneapolis Disparity Study - **Tuesday, June 28th** 6:00-8:00PM at the Minneapolis Central Library, Pohlad Room, RSVP by June 14, 2011, RSVPCivilRightsForum@ci.minneapolis.mn.us

Urban Ag Efforts Move Forward. I have introduced the subject matter of all of the zoning code text amendments recommended by the recently passed Urban Agriculture Policy Plan. My hope is that we will make the necessary changes to the zoning code by the next growing season.

Violence Prevention Conference. The City organized a Youth Violence Prevention conference on May 27th. The event was attended by US Attorney General Eric Holder, and is the first step of a community engagement process on the Youth Violence Blueprint for Action that will be continuing this summer. I am extremely supportive of this great work that I help initiate in 2006, which addresses one of the most critical issues facing our communities. Senators Amy and Franken also attended the conference, co-sponsored by the Minneapolis Foundation. The initiative takes comprehensive, collaborative, public-health approach and appears to have helped reduce youth violence. Since 2006, for example, the number of youth arrested for or suspected in violent crime has dropped 56%. In the same period, the number of incidents involving guns and youth has dropped 58%. The four goals of the plan are to: 1) connect every youth to a trusted adult; 2) intervene at the first sign that youth are at risk of violence; 3) restore youth who have gone down the wrong path; and 4) unlearn the culture of violence in the community. For more visit <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/dhfs/yvpreport.asp>

U of M Climate Action Plan. The U of M organized a presentation and discussion on the Twin Cities Campus Climate Action Plan for Wednesday, May 25. I believe that this is one of the effects of the student organizing around Campuses Beyond Coal, and was pleased to see the U lay out some real targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning away from coal.

Met Transit Seeks Air Permit to Paint Trains at Franklin Facility. Metro Transit is seeking a permit that will regulate emissions and operations at its Light Rail Operations and Maintenance Facility. The permit is needed so Metro Transit can spray paint light rail trains, perform additional maintenance activities, and use natural-gas-fired heating equipment and an emergency generator at its maintenance facility. The MPCA reviewed the Metro Transit permit application with respect to applicable federal and state rules including the cumulative levels and effects. While the draft air permit includes stringent emission limits and operational limits for the facility I have concerns and will be asking the MPCA to delay approval until the community has more time to study the proposal. If you have any questions, contact Sarah Sevcik at AirPermitMpls.pca@state.mn.us or 651-757-2715.

Facing Race Idea Challenge will award grants for anti-racism ideas. Facing racism can be difficult, but we can all take steps to create communities where everyone feels safe, valued and respected. To generate fresh ideas for reducing racism in Minnesota, The Saint Paul Foundation has launched the Facing Race Idea Challenge. Submit your ideas for reducing racism by June 3 at www.incommons.org/FacingRaceChallenge. A panel of community volunteers will evaluate and narrow idea submissions to a pool of five finalists. Finalists will be announced on the Facing Race Idea Challenge website, and all Minnesotans can get involved in voting for the best ideas. The top two entries with the most votes will receive grants of \$2,500 each for implementation. For complete details or to submit an idea, go to www.incommons.org/FacingRaceChallenge.

Community Involvement in Park Projects. The Park Board has developed a draft new policy and ordinance amendment related to how it involves the community in park projects, and is seeking public review and comment through mid June on the proposed changes. They are designed to improve practices for how the MPRB works and communicates with Minneapolis residents and park users. From May 2 through June 15, the draft policy and amended ordinance are available for review at www.minneapolisparcs.org, recreation centers and Park Board headquarters. Comments can be submitted online during that same period or via email to feedback@minneapolisparcs.org, or by attending a public information meeting on **June 2**, 9-10am at MPRB Headquarters, 2117 West River Rd.

Move In Move Out. Southeast Como's Move In Move Out (MIMO) free store is back in business starting May 12th at the University of Minnesota's Reuse Warehouse, 883 29th Ave SE. The spring schedule from May 12-June 4 is Thursdays from 8am-8pm and Saturdays from 10am-2pm (closed 5/28). The store is being made available to University students and SE Minneapolis residents. Shoppers may be asked to show proof of address or a student ID. Contact the Southeast Como Improvement Association office to find out more at <http://secomo.org/>.

No-Pruning Season for Ash Trees. The emerald ash borer is active now through Labor Day. As trees are budding and flowers are blooming, a beetle that attacks and kills ash trees is also coming out of dormancy for the season. The emerald ash borer is present in Prospect Park and Seward, and is active from May through Labor Day. If you have an ash tree in your yard, it is important not to prune it this time of year or move any part of an ash tree (firewood, branches, etc.) while the pest is active. Not sure if you have an ash tree in your yard? See ash tree identification tips here: <http://www.mda.state.mn.us/news/publications/ext/ashtreeid.pdf>.

Riverside Avenue Reconstruction. The Riverside Avenue reconstruction project is officially moving forward. It will begin construction in early to mid July. During construction it will be closed to traffic for some time and there will be detours, primarily on Franklin and Cedar. The second section of Riverside from 23rd to Cedar will be finished in 2012. The property owners along the first phase of the Riverside Avenue reconstruction project have opted to pay an extra, voluntary assessment for upgraded pedestrian-level lighting. I thank Augsburg College and Fairview for their willingness to contribute towards improving the neighborhood, and Public Works staff for their additional work to provide the information that made it possible for the institutions to come to this decision.

Franklin and 26th Bike Lanes. In the next few months, Hennepin County will be striping bike lanes on Franklin from Riverside to Minnehaha and on 26th Ave S from the Midtown Greenway to Franklin. My office, along with the Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Seward Neighborhood Group and Seward Redesign, has reviewed the plans and suggested potential improvements. I thank the County for being willing to build these important bicycle facilities into their projects, and for working so well with the neighborhood.

Road Work in Seward. It is going to be a busy summer of road work in Seward. The resurfacing of Franklin Ave will begin on June 14th, and last approximately two weeks. This is a Hennepin County project, and for more information you can contact the County's Milling and Paving Operations staff Jake Bronder at jake.bronder@co.hennepin.mn.us. The City will also be resurfacing S 9th St and Butler Place this year. Construction will occur during the summer or fall, though the actual start date is not yet scheduled. This will also only take a few days to a week if the weather is good. MnDOT will also be working on upgrading the driving surface of I-94 that runs along the edge of Seward, and expect to close the Riverside ramps during at least one weekend in late summer or early fall.

Seward Commons Land Sale. The Council has voted to sell a small piece of land in the old Bystrom Brothers site to make the next phase of development possible.

Seward Dual-Stream Recycling. If you are within the boundaries of the Seward Dual-Stream Recycling pilot, I encourage you to both participate and encourage your neighbors to participate, either by contacting them directly or by agreeing to put up a lawn sign.

7th and 20th Land Sale. The Council has taken an action to sell the two lots at the corner of 7th St and 20th Ave to the Greater Minneapolis Housing Corporation, with the participation of the Cedar Riverside NRP. This action was informed by the formal positions taken by the West Bank Community Coalition and Cedar Riverside NRP. I look forward to seeing new housing developed on that site, and thank the West Bank community for your patience, perseverance, and work to make this happen.

East River Bank Safety. Responding to concerns from residents about illicit activities on the easterly side of the Mississippi River Bank in and near St. Paul, I have been working with St. Paul Council Member Russ Stark and Minneapolis Park Commissioner Liz Wielinski, to explore ways to improve safety and access along the River near the border. At a meeting held in early May residents, park staff, city officials, police and others from both cities met and agreed to form a committee to investigate the feasibility of a two-city park along the river gorge, which could include a trail extension, dog park, and/or additional interpretive features.

Resurfacing in Prospect Park Phase 2. Two sections of streets will be resurfaced in the Prospect Park this spring and summer. William Street and the other streets in the Glendale area will be resurfaced between May 26 and June 2. The last phase of the neighborhood road resurfacing project that was started last year, includes the River Terrace will be done later in the summer or early fall.

Smoke-Free Policies. The Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support is working on a number of smoke-free policies for low-income housing in various parts of the city, including several buildings in Ward 2: 2728 E Franklin, Seward Towers East and West, Glendale Townhomes and Riverside Plaza. The Minneapolis Public Housing Authority has decided to transition 2728 to a smoke-free building slowly, “grandfathering in” all existing smokers but requiring that new tenants be non-smokers, and establishing one set of townhomes in Glendale that will be smoke free. I support smoke-free policies, both for reasons of health – especially children’s health – and for reasons of social equity, as families living in multiunit buildings don’t have the same opportunities to provide a smoke-free environment for their kids. I have encouraged the Seward Towers Board to take whatever action they deem appropriate to move towards smoke-free policies in the Towers.

Congratulations to Merrie Benasutti, best known on the West Bank as the associate director of the CHANCE program, on receiving the University of Minnesota’s 2010-2011 Outstanding Community Service Award. The award “recognizes members of the University community whose accomplishments have resulted in long-term and lasting changes for the public good.” Given the immense amount of fantastic, neighborhood-supporting work I have seen CHANCE students do on the West Bank in the last five years, this award is richly deserved. I join the U in commending Merrie on her accomplishments, and I thank her on behalf of the City for her work.

Central Corridor Construction. Metro Transit bus detours have begun for areas under construction for the Central Corridor project. For full information on bus stop changes and bus detours, go to www.metrotransit.org/construction or call the Transit Information Center at (612) 373-3333 for the most current information. The I-35W ramp from Westbound 3rd Street to south I-35W, east HWY 55, west I-94 closed, as have Washington Avenue/3rd & 4th Street between downtown and the East Bank. The north ramps from Washington to Cedar Ave have also closed, and traffic will be routed through the south ramps. In addition, the Washington Ave Transit Mall area has now closed to general traffic.

Environmental Remediation Grant Applications. The City has applied to the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) Contamination Cleanup and Investigation Grant Program, Metropolitan Council Tax Base Revitalization Account funds, and Hennepin County Environmental Response Fund for environmental remediation for the Oak Street Flats and University Gateway projects.

Federal Grants sought for West Bank Infrastructure Improvements. The Council has approved applying for a \$4.25 Million grant from the Federal Highway Administration to reconstruct 4th St S and 15th Ave S, as well as reconstruction of the pedestrian realm on Cedar Ave in the Cedar Riverside neighborhood.

Internal Audit on Police Overtime. The Internal Audit Department (IA) conducted a review of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) and reported that for 2010, the total MPD payroll costs, including regular pay and overtime, were approximately \$78.3 million. Total overtime expense was approximately \$4.3 million, or 5.5% of total payroll. The audit found that the department could make several improvements to its policies and procedures related to tracking and approving overtime. It also recommended that the Labor Agreement between the City of Minneapolis and the Police Officers' Federation of Minneapolis should be re-written for better clarity, organization and elimination of potential conflict. You can see the report here <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/council/2011-meetings/20110429/Audit20110426specagenda.asp>

Pedicabs. Council Member Schiff is working on an ordinance amendment at the request of pedicab operators, to make it easier for them to operate. My office will be working with him, through the Bicycle Advisory Committee, to craft solutions that work.

“Green the Wall” event. Volunteers are needed on Saturday, June 4 to help plant vines on the Hiawatha Avenue sound wall. After years of painting over graffiti on parts of the Hiawatha Avenue sound wall, the Minnesota Department of Transportation is teaming up with community volunteers on Saturday, June 4th to plant vines as a graffiti deterrent. Volunteers are needed to help plant 120 Engleman Ivy plants along both sides of the wall on Saturday, June 4 starting at 9 a.m. Volunteers will meet on the west side of the wall adjacent to the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority parking lot at 2121 16th Avenue South. Anyone interested in volunteering to green the wall can RSVP by calling (612) 673-2209.

Translation Services Available to Neighborhoods. The city's Access and Outreach Team will take requests from city departments and neighborhood organizations to assist in translating documents. For interpretation requests, the Access and Outreach Team track phone calls received from city residents from each language line who need assistance in accessing city services, face to face interpretation as well as interpreting at a community meeting or event. The demand for translation and interpretation has steadily increased from January to March. For more information regarding the work of the Access and Outreach team, please visit: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/ncr/access-and-outreach.asp>.

Openings on City Boards and Commissions. There are openings on the Latino Advisory Committee, Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission, Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC), Senior Citizens Advisory Committee Vacancy, and Minneapolis Telecommunications Network (MTN). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

Ward Office Hours. Every Tuesday morning I hold “Office Hours” in the Ward from 9:30-11:00am. Please feel free to call for an appointment or just stop by.

1st Tuesdays, Hard Times Café (West Bank/University);
2nd Tuesdays, Muddsuckers Coffee, 1500 Como (SE Como);
3rd Tuesdays, Pratt School (Prospect Park);
4th Tuesdays, the Birchwood Cafe (Seward/Longfellow).

Yours, in peace and cooperation,

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