

Council Member Cam Gordon's Report to Seward Neighborhood 10-29-08

**Cam's next Seward Office Hours:
Tuesday, November 25, 9:30-11:00am
Birchwood Café, 3311 E 25th St**

Items:

- 1) West River Parkway Bike/Ped Path Reconstruction
 - 2) Historic Resource Survey
 - 3) Ranked Choice Voting 2009 Implementation
 - 4) Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy
 - 5) Progress on Sustainability Targets
 - 6) Proposed Noise Ordinance
 - 7) Community Engagement and NRP
 - 8) Emerald Ash Borer
 - 9) No Heat / Low Heat in Effect
 - 10) New Waste Hauling Contract
 - 11) Plastics Recycling
 - 12) Planetarium
 - 13) Restorative Justice RFP
 - 14) Openings on City Boards and Commissions
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- 1) Next year, the Park Board will reconstruct the West River Parkway bicycle and pedestrian paths. They have asked interested Seward residents to join a working group that will help them make determinations about design elements.
 - 2) This fall, City Heritage Preservation staff is starting a Historic Resource Survey that includes the Seward neighborhood. The City was first surveyed for historic resources in the 1970s and many of the designated landmarks and historic districts we have today are a result of this original survey. Since 2001, CPED-Planning staff has conducted a re-survey of historic resources in Minneapolis. A reassessment of historic resources is needed because of the aging of many types of historic resources as well as changing attitudes about which types of historic resources need to be identified, e.g. historic landscapes, cultural and ethnic group resources, high-style homes versus vernacular styles. Molly McCartney has asked to meet with SNG to update you on the survey and talk about community meetings this winter and spring. I think this is a great opportunity for the neighborhood, a way to capitalize on the resounding success of the SNG History Walks and other History Committee activities.
 - 3) 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.
 - 4) The Council has established the City's first-ever Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Policy. I 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.
 - 5) Minneapolis has been ranked the **seventh** most sustainable large city in the US by SustainLane.com, up from #10 last year. Additionally, according to the census, we are within .1% of being the US city with the highest bicycle mode share – we're up to **3.8%**, just behind Portland's 3.9%.
 - 6) 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. I plan to introduce these ordinances at the next Council meeting on November 7th.

- 7) The Council has voted to establish a new Department of Neighborhood and Community Relations, 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.

The department will function under the supervision of the City Coordinator and is intended to both serve residents directly and support all other City departments 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 and these organizations.

The 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 Force's 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.

We were 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 this setback, 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 City responsibility.

Please consider serving on the Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission, or ask others you feel would be a good fit to apply!

- 8) If you're planning to get some wood for your fireplace this winter, please be aware that there could be a destructive stowaway in your logs. The emerald ash borer is an invasive pest that attacks ash trees, has already killed more than 40 million ash trees nationwide, and has spread as far east as Wisconsin. You can help slow the spread by **Buying or harvesting your wood near the area where you are going to burn the wood.** Avoid moving firewood from its area of origination; especially avoid bringing wood into Minnesota from out of state. **Watching your ash trees carefully.** The earlier the emerald ash borer is found, the sooner it can be addressed. Residents should examine ash trees in their neighborhood for tree canopy thinning or small D-shaped exit holes left in the bark by the borer. If there is any suspicion that a tree is infested, residents can contact the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's "Arrest the Pest" hotline at (651) 201-6684 for the metro area or 1-888-545-6684 for greater Minnesota.
- 9) 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.
- 10) The Council has voted to contract with Minneapolis Refuse, Inc, and Aspen Waste System for trash hauling. This contract is the result of the first open, competitive bidding process for the City's garbage service in decades, and will result in cost savings of around \$45,000 over the next five years.
- 11) The City has extended the "All Plastics Pilot Program" in Northeast, which accepts plastic for recycling that is not accepted in standard pickup. I am very excited about this program, and I look forward to broadening it to more locations citywide.
- 12) The City has pledged \$5 million in Urban Development Action Grant funds to endowment fund for the Minnesota Planetarium and Space Discovery Center, which we hope will be built on the top of the Central Library in downtown.
- 13) Today, the Public Safety and Regulatory Services committee voted to release a request for proposals for restorative justice services. The total amount the City is dedicating towards restorative justice through this process is \$77,100.
- 14) There are openings on the Arts Commission (11/14/2008), Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee (11/7/08), Civilian Police Review Authority (10/17/08), Housing Board of Appeals (11/21/2008), Neighborhood and Community Engagement Commission (11/19/08), Public Health Advisory Committee (11/21/08), Truth In Sale of Housing Appeals Board (10/31/08) and Youth Violence Prevention Executive Committee (10/31/08). To apply, call (612) 673-3358 or email cityclerk@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.