

Our Tax Dollars at Work

Anyone who tells you that “government doesn’t create jobs” has probably never driven on a public road, walked by a police or fire station, or thrown out a piece of trash. Our great city works because of the 7,000 employees who work for it – and live in it.

Approximately 85% of the city’s operating budget goes to salaries and benefits. Forty-four percent of those paycheck, pension, and health care dollars go to our 2,700 police department personnel, another 19% goes to our 1,000 fire department personnel, and 15% more pays for our 1,300 DPW employees – the sanitation, forestry, and road crews. These are the people who build our streets, who keep them safe, who keep them clean, and who provide the water when we turn on our faucets.

The city budget for 2012 – and the essential services and infrastructure it provides – has been balanced largely as a result of asking these employees to bear a larger share of their health care benefit costs. All of them, including police and fire, will now be paying 12% of health insurance premiums – as well as higher deductibles and co-pays – which will save the city about \$23 million. The State of Wisconsin, however, has reduced city aids and shared revenue by \$13 million for 2012 and by more than \$80 million in inflation-adjusted terms since 2003.

This transaction between the state government and our city employees has no effect on the ongoing structural deficit facing Milwaukee. Current projections indicate that an average of \$70 million – more than 10% of our operating budget – will be necessary every year for the next decade in order to fulfill our pension obligations. And that is compounded by the annual \$80 million reduction in state aids and shared revenue compared to 10 years ago.

Earlier this November, within these grim fiscal constraints, the Common Council completed our review and amending of the Mayor’s proposed budget. Some of the key changes we made were:

Decline in State Shared Revenue to Milwaukee 2003-2012 (In Millions)



- Reducing the Mayor’s proposed \$1.6 million property tax increase by \$261,000, meaning that the 2012 tax levy will be \$248 million, a 0.5% increase from 2011.
- Delaying capital spending on office remodeling for the City Attorney and Police Departments and instead investing more in infrastructure that citizens will directly benefit from: local street, sidewalk, and alley reconstructions and preservation of abandoned or foreclosed homes.
- Adding \$2 million of general capital reserves into the pension reserve fund so that we are better prepared to meet those looming future obligations over the next decade.

Economic and Environmental Sustainability

Milwaukee is becoming a leader in sustainability and green technologies, both within government and in the private sector. We are a hub of water and energy research on the Fresh Coast of the World. The city just broke ground on a wind turbine in our port, foreign and domestic manufacturers of wind turbines and solar panels have recently relocated to the Menomonee Valley, and UWM has plans to expand its Great Lakes Water Research Facility into a graduate school just south of our downtown.

Thanks to community organizations like Growing Power and Walnut Way and now Sweet Water Organics, Milwaukee has long been a leader in the urban agriculture and local food movements. City government has changed several laws and polices to make urban gardens more likely and successful, including the new honey and egg ordinances – both sponsored by Alderman Kovac – which legalize bee and hen keeping.

We will continue to push for this kind of innovation, job creation, and local production that aligns our long-term economic and environmental interests. We also encourage you to do the same thing within the four walls of your home and underneath the lids of your garbage and recycling carts.

Please help us reach our goal of diverting 40% of all trash from landfills by the year 2020 (and that is now easier for you to do because you no longer have to sort paper from plastic in your recycling carts), and please save money on your monthly energy bill by participating in the Me² program – which will also create jobs in our local economy and preserve our planet’s precious resources. Details on how to do this are lower down on this page, below the fold.



Have a safe, healthy and joyful holiday season!

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NIK KOVAC

Budget, Development, and Sustainability Update

FALL/WINTER 2011

Dear Residents,
2011 has been a winning year for our local sports teams – the Packers, the Brewers, and the Riverside Tigers – and a tumultuous year in our local politics. Not long after the Packers were bringing the Lombardi Trophy home, our state capitol became full of new laws and concerned citizens. Much of that legislation and activism is being felt here in Milwaukee, especially in our budgeting process.

Inside this newsletter are updates on Milwaukee’s 2012 budget, and also on the larger economic, social, and environmental forces both shaping and being shaped by our municipal laws, investments, and policies. The inside centerfold displays photos, renderings, and descriptions of the many new construction projects underway or under consideration in our neighborhoods. The back pages advertise new city-sponsored opportunities to make your home more energy-efficient and your household waste less wasteful.

In particular, I would like to draw your attention to possible changes at our local library on E. North Ave. and Cramer St. If you want to see for yourself how a ground-floor library within a 4-story apartment building will operate, please visit the brand new Villard Square Library at 35th St. on the northwest side of town. We are currently considering whether to start a similar project here on the east side.

With that project, with all projects, and with every zoning, licensing, budgeting, and legislative decision I am a part of, I know it will always be a better decision if you know what’s going on and then tell me how we can do it better. Please keep contacting my office with suggestions.

Let’s continue building Milwaukee’s future together.

Nik Kovac
Nik Kovac
3rd District Alderman

Stimulating the Private Sector

A well-run municipal government creates many more jobs than just those on its payroll. Some of this occurs indirectly: when infrastructure is well-maintained and basic services are high-quality, then businesses and workers are more likely to locate here and stay here.

Sometimes it is more direct, as when the city provided loans for two major downtown construction projects and partnered with a developer on the mixed-use Villard Square Library (details are on the other side of this trifold). Or when the city improves and then sells land to industrial companies in the formerly contaminated Menomonee Valley and 30th Street Industrial Corridor.

To date, the projects have created thousands of both permanent and construction jobs.



Social Justice in the Workforce

Alderman Kovac spoke at a City Hall press conference celebrating the passage of legislation, sponsored by the alderman and his colleagues, that will require that significant percentages of all jobs created by city contracts and subsidies will go to city residents and to minority- and women-owned local businesses.

Milwaukee's New Single Sort Recycling

The city’s new single sort recycling program is now in effect. Single sort recycling is a system that allows all recyclables to be mixed together in the recycling cart or bin. It means that only one sort is necessary – separating all the recyclables from trash. **Papers and containers no longer need to be kept separate.** Special equipment will be used to separate them once they reach a recycling facility. However, it does NOT mean that garbage and recyclables may be mixed together.

Have questions? Call (414) 286-CITY (2489) www.MilwaukeeRecycles.com

With MORE Recycling Materials Accepted!

- > All plastics numbered ♻️
- > Aluminum containers, foil & pans
- > Bulky #2 plastics (ex. 5-gallon buckets)
- > Cardboard & paperboard
- > Cartons
- > Glass bottles & jars
- > Metal pots & pans
- > Mixed paper & junk mail
- > Newspapers, magazines & catalogs
- > Phone books
- > Steel cans & empty aerosol cans

NEWLY ACCEPTED ITEMS IN BLUE

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