

ALDERMAN NIK
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WINTER 14

Dear Neighbor,

With the winter and holiday seasons upon us, it's a great time for all of us to reflect on what has been happening lately on the East Side and in Riverwest. This is an exciting time for the City of Milwaukee, full of challenges and opportunities. Inside the pages of this newsletter you will find updates on what's going on in our neighborhoods—and how we fit into the bigger picture of this great and diverse metropolis.

East North Avenue is the crossroads of the East Side, and it just got a brand new living room full of books. On page 2, you can learn about our new East Library, and also several other buildings that are being built all around it. Everyone knows that East North Avenue ends at Water Tower Hill with a spectacular view of Lake Michigan. But did you also know that where North Avenue meets the river, just a mile west of the lake, is a new Arboretum with miles of hiking trails?

Soon there will also be a streetcar that connects our district to the downtown. There is already one new skyscraper going up downtown, and the streetcar will spur the development of several other new silhouettes on our skyline. All that construction will create thousands of jobs—which our city desperately needs.

Throughout Milwaukee, there are too many vacant and foreclosed buildings, and too many of our neighbors are unemployed. Inside these pages you will learn about several initiatives the Common Council is spearheading in order to tackle those challenges.

You will also find opportunities within this newsletter to get more involved in our neighborhoods. We need to increase owner occupancy on all of our blocks, and we need to encourage everyone to get more involved in our local schools. Maryland, Hartford, Riverside, Fratney and Pierce are all great schools, and we should all be working to make them even better.

Let's continue building Milwaukee's future together.

Nik Kovac
Alderman, 3rd District

**Streetcar is Big League Public Transit for a Big League City**

Milwaukee is a big league city. I'm not just talking about the Bucks, the Brewers and the Packers. Across all categories of culture, we punch above our weight. Whether it's the Milwaukee Repertory Theater, the Symphony, the Orchestra, Pabst and Turner Halls, the Art Museum, the Harley Museum, Discovery World or Summerfest, we are a destination for artists and lovers of culture from across the world.

There is one major category, however, where we come up way short. Take a look at the list of cities with fixed rail as the spine of their transit system, and we are the only major league city without it.

After decades of waiting, planning and debating, that is finally about to change. I am proud to say that I support the Mayor's bold new plan for public transit. Construction will begin late in 2015.

These 4.6 miles of streetcar track will connect the Intermodal Station to the lakefront and both of those places to the rest of downtown and the lower east side. Those miles of track will spur new cranes in the sky for developments that could total a private investment of \$2 billion.

The money we will invest to make that happen is \$59 million. Without that investment, that additional tax base simply won't be there. We are not diverting tax dollars from other priorities. We are creating new resources. It is a smart investment by any measure.

And these tracks are just the beginning. Extensions are planned to the northeast, the north, the west and the south. Even with these valuable connections to our neighborhoods, the streetcar will never replace our bus system. Rather, the fixed rail and the rubber tires will work together—like they do in every other major American city—to get people around.

Learn more at
www.themilwaukeestreetcar.com. ■



Photo by John December

With New Library at its Heart, North Avenue is Booming ↗

The Milwaukee Public Library has had some presence on the East Side for more than 100 years, and with the completion of the library’s new East Branch on E. North Avenue, its ability to continue to enrich the lives of Eastsiders is now assured for the century ahead.

“Libraries are places for communities to reimagine, reinvent and relearn, and the reconstitution of this site into the East Branch library is indicative of the transformation that’s taking place on North Avenue,” Alderman Kovac said. As a member of the Library Board of Trustees, he has long advocated for the East Branch, and played a role in selecting the public art that is displayed in and around it.

The brand new 18,000-square foot library was opened to the public on November 22. It features an abundance of bright, comfortable places to sit and read, work or hold meetings. The focal point for many visitors has been likened to a living room for the whole community, with tall windows, comfortable chairs and a fireplace overlooking E. North Avenue.

A large meeting room and collaboration space at the heart of the new building is framed in 16-foot-tall vertical sections of tempered channel glass that allow natural light into the elliptical space. The doors can be left open, inviting people to fill the space, or closed during use for meetings and programs. Along with a number of other public gathering places, members of the public can reserve the meeting room for their use.

Above the East Branch are 99 apartments with underground parking and a retail space adjacent to the library on the first floor. The Standard at East Library was developed by HSI, Inc. and designed by Engberg Anderson.

More information is available at www.mpl.org.

Location:
2320 N. Cramer St.

HOURS	
MON	10 AM – 8 PM
TUE	12 PM – 8 PM
WED	12 PM – 8 PM
THU	10 AM – 6 PM
FRI	10 AM – 6 PM
SAT	10 AM – 5 PM
SUN	CLOSED



With the new zoning rules and architectural standards championed by Alderman Kovac, there are many other new developments underway along North Avenue:

- 1 Described by developers as an “urban theater” where passers-by can watch expert climbers navigate challenging rock walls, work is underway on Rivercrest Phase II at the corner of E. North Avenue and N. Commerce Street. The project will integrate an Adventure Rock climbing gym with a four-story, 46 unit apartment building and 65 indoor parking spaces. The gym will feature more than 18,000 square feet of climbing walls at heights up to 42 feet.
- 2 The home of the East Side’s famous Pizza Man Restaurant until a fire destroyed the building in 2010, the corner of E. North Avenue and N. Oakland Avenue has risen from the ashes. Joseph Property Development is nearing completion on construction of a 39-unit mixed use apartment building which includes 6,000 square-feet of commercial space.
- 3 A site that has housed everything from movie theaters to car dealerships, the old Prospect Mall at 2217 N. Prospect Ave. is entering yet another life as a mixed-use development. The Overlook on Prospect will include four new floors housing 52 apartments, as well as 52 indoor parking spots and about 10,000 square feet of retail space. ■



Jobs Available Raising New Tower Downtown ➔

Work is underway on a new high-rise office tower downtown that will reshape the city skyline, and City of Milwaukee residents will play a crucial role in building it.

As part of a deal negotiated with the Milwaukee Common Council, Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership will help Northwestern Mutual meet an objective in which 40 percent of the jobs on the site will go to residents of the City of Milwaukee.

Overall, the project is expected to create 1,000 construction jobs. Northwestern Mutual is building the 32-story, 550-foot tower next to its historic 1914 headquarters.

To learn about job opportunities on the NWM construction site, call WRTP/Big Step at (414) 342-9787. ■



Bike-sharing Arrives in Milwaukee >

The Bublr bike share system went online this summer, enabling people to rent bikes at kiosks throughout the city. Under legislation Alderman Kovac co-sponsored, the City of Milwaukee partnered with the nonprofit Midwest Bikeshare to open ten such kiosks throughout the downtown, with plans to launch dozens more citywide in the years ahead—including many on the East Side. ■



Alderman Kovac arrives at City Hall during “Bike to Work Week” in May.

Council Approves New Protections for Trees Along Milwaukee River >

The removal or disruption of most trees in the area surrounding the Milwaukee River will now be prohibited, under legislation authored by Alderman Kovac.

“The area surrounding the Milwaukee River is an irreplaceable asset that provides some of the best hiking trails and scenic vistas found in any major city the world over,” Alderman Kovac said. “Along with the Milwaukee River Greenway Overlay Zoning and Stormwater Ordinance that I co-sponsored several years ago, this last piece of legal protection will preserve this resource for generations to come.”

Co-sponsored by Council Members Milele A. Coggs, Ashanti Hamilton, Jim Bohl and Robert Bauman, the legislation prohibits any person from removing, damaging or disturbing trees within the primary environmental corridor

of the Milwaukee River Greenway Overlay Zone. Established in 2010, the overlay zone encompasses a rough area that includes the bluffs along the Milwaukee River between North Avenue and Silver Spring Drive, and is outlined in greater detail on the city’s website.

The legislation makes exceptions to the prohibition on tree removal for trees with a diameter of less than six inches, for dead or diseased trees identified by a professional forester or arborist and for invasive species that include Common or European Buckthorn, Glossy or Smooth Buckthorn and any species of Honeysuckle.

Anyone who wishes to remove any other tree within the primary environmental corridor may attempt to obtain a Tree Maintenance and Conservation Permit from the Commissioner of Public Works. ■

Rotary Club Arboretum Offers an Urban Outdoors Experience >

A gateway to the Milwaukee River Greenway, the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum now offers visitors a chance to escape the “urban jungle” without ever having to pass city limits.

A partnership with the Urban Ecology Center, the River Revitalization Foundation, the Milwaukee Urban Rivers Foundation, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources’ Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, the county and the city, the Milwaukee Rotary Centennial Arboretum opened last year to commemorate the club’s 100th anniversary. Developed on abandoned post-industrial land along the Milwaukee River, the arboretum extends from North Avenue to Locust Street, lacing Riverside Park with forested trails for visitors to explore.



The 40-acre arboretum is a biologically diverse native ecosystem that will serve as an important recreational, teaching and research center. Features include a stunning stone archway at the main entrance, a newly planted oak savannah, 3.7 miles of trails, tens of thousands of native plant species and three distinct learning areas to help schoolchildren learn to appreciate the outdoors. It’s estimated that 300,000 people will visit the site annually. ■

Cutting Costs and Pollution with Solar Riverwest ➤

Seventeen home and business owners in Milwaukee’s Riverwest neighborhood have seized an opportunity to take advantage of record low solar pricing through the “Solar Riverwest” group purchase program.

The pilot program helped residents invest in lower cost solar installations through volume-purchasing. The program was created through a partnership with the Riverwest Co-operative Alliance, Midwest Renewable Energy Association and Milwaukee Shines, the city’s solar program. Since its completion in 2013, other Milwaukee neighborhoods have replicated Solar Riverwest’s success, and plans are in the works for additional group buys in 2015.

“When communities run their own volume purchasing programs, they reduce costs associated with a traditional solar installation,” Alderman Kovac said. “Participants can save on their future energy bills as well as on the installation of solar panels.”



Alderman Kovac participates in the kickoff celebration for Solar Riverwest at one of the first installation sites.

For details on the program and upcoming education sessions, visit www.MilwaukeeShines.com or email solar@milwaukee.gov ■

Second Chances Working for Milwaukee ➤

Dozens of people trying to make a career for themselves after periods of unemployment or incarceration are finding second chances working for the City of Milwaukee through new transitional jobs programs. The 2015 budget, which Alderman Kovac helped shape through his role as Finance and Personnel Committee chair, funded more than 130 transitional jobs positions for the year ahead.

One such program, launched this year, created 100 positions to supplement Department of Public Works efforts to patch potholes and repair roads. Participants earn a living wage of \$10.10 an hour working for a limited term with the city and gaining valuable on-the-job experience.

“For people who are down on their luck, sometimes all that’s needed is for one employer to give them a chance,” Alderman Kovac said. “With the skills and experience these temporary employees will earn, they will be better qualified for permanent jobs that open up with the city or with private employers.”

Another program, the Dombrowski Landscape Training Initiative, focused on landscape maintenance of city-owned foreclosed and vacant properties. Thirty low-income participants earned valuable job skills and a number of certifications over the course of the 17-week program, all while cleaning up blight in urban neighborhoods. ■

Owner-Occupancy Increasing ➤

In recent years, East Side neighbors have been meeting twice annually to figure out ways we can increase owner-occupancy everywhere, but especially on blocks near the UWM campus. The owner-occupancy rate east of the river is a very solid 60 percent, but on many blocks there are hardly any owner-occupied homes—and it is on those blocks that our police, DNS and DPW employees are spending most of their time.

Working with all of the those departments, our neighbors and the university, several initiatives are underway to improve the quality of life on all blocks on the East Side.

To learn more about these developments, please go to www.milwaukee.gov/district3. ■



■ Non-Owner-Occupied Residential Parcel

Common Council Finds Opportunities for Efficiencies in 2015 Approved Budget

With Alderman Kovac now serving as the chair of the budget-building Finance and Personnel Committee, the Milwaukee Common Council has approved a 2015 city budget that maintains city services, creates efficiencies and expands support for successful programs, all while holding the line on property taxes.

“Council members worked hard to ensure that this budget protects taxpayers while reflecting the priorities of our constituents,” Alderman Kovac said. “Without increasing the burden on residents, we were able to find a way to channel additional support to combat the foreclosure crisis head-on while also piloting some innovative public safety initiatives.”

The Common Council signed off on an increase in transitional jobs positions that will be offered by the Department of Public Works in the year ahead. Focused on providing work and fostering jobs skills for unemployed residents, the transitional jobs program will put 130 people to work on landscaping, road repair and other areas next year—an expansion from the initial group of 100 participants in 2014.

Over the course of six weeks, council members offered more than 40 amendments to the mayor’s budget, of which 13 were adopted. These include:

- Transferring \$3.5 million from the local streets program to the High-Impact paving program. The popular repaving initiative creates a new surface on high-traffic roads in the span of several days, extending their useful life and addressing residents’ pothole complaints.

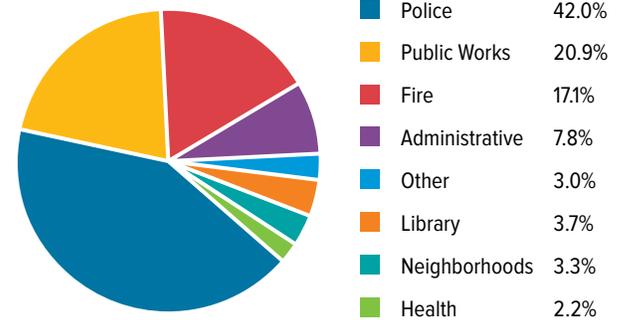
New Budget Creates All-Hands-On-Deck Approach to Public Safety

In amending the 2015 city budget, the Finance and Personnel Committee took a more holistic view of what causes—and thus what prevents—crime.

Among the amendments they approved for the mayor’s budget was a plan to increase summer job opportunities for unemployed adults, fund Promise Zones in the city’s highest crime neighborhoods on the north and south sides and create rapid crisis response teams composed of trauma-informed specialists who will be housed in the Police Districts which have the highest rates of violent crime.

“Too often, the same children who witness violence one year commit it the next year,” Alderman Kovac said. “We need to get in the middle of that cycle and change the expectations on our streets.”

Tax Levy-Funded Operating Budget: By Department



- Eliminating plans to build a Fire Department Repair Shop for \$2.9 million and remodel the eighth floor of City Hall for \$3.1 million. These cuts will reduce new borrowing by \$3.1 million, while channeling an additional \$1.5 million to the High-Impact paving program, increasing funding for the STRONG Homes loan program by \$500,000 and adding \$1 million to the Rental Rehabilitation Program capital account.
- A more holistic approach to public safety. See below.

The 2015 budget levies \$256,767,059 million in property taxes, an increase of 1.2 percent from last year that will cost \$4.10 more in taxes for the owner of home valued at \$103,000—the median home value in the city. The approved levy comes in \$103,561 below the mayor’s initial proposed levy as a result of amendments made and efficiencies created by the Common Council. ■

Another amendment assigns additional building inspectors specifically into buildings that house the most criminal activity. It is based on interior inspection zones already in existence on the East Side and in Lindsay Heights.

“The problem of violence in this city is too deep for just the police to combat,” Alderman Kovac said. “It is essential that every city employee—along with the community—attacks this issue.”

And Milwaukee will join a growing nationwide trend in law enforcement by establishing a recruitment class of 10 “community service officers.” These civilian law enforcement assistants will respond to non-emergency police calls, freeing up officers for higher-priority matters. ■

Strong Neighborhoods Plan Targets Foreclosure Problems



Alderman Kovac joined Mayor Tom Barrett when he signed his 2014 budget in a foreclosed home on the city's north side, creating the Strong Neighborhoods Plan to combat foreclosure.

The Strong Neighborhoods Plan, a centerpiece of the city's 2015 budget, redoubles city efforts to reduce the number and mitigate the impacts of tax-foreclosed properties that the city owns. The Department of City Development is responsible for managing and marketing that inventory, and DCD staffers are now moving forward on many fronts to implement the SNP.

"Foreclosures drive down Milwaukee property values and increase the share of taxes that each homeowner pays," Alderman Kovac said. "This problem effects every neighborhood in the city, but with a citywide approach, we can begin to repair the damage."

In its first year, the SNP has reduced the inventory of tax-foreclosed homes from a peak of more than 1,500 to its current 1,100. Real estate staff members handle the intake of tax-foreclosed properties by inspecting them, negotiating leases with tenants living in units at the time of foreclosure, arranging to re-key and board vacant properties, referring some properties for demolition and marketing the inventory that can be redeveloped.

In 2015, the Department of City Development expects to shift emphasis from demolishing the most deteriorated houses to preserving the remaining stock.

To learn more, visit the DCD website at www.milwaukee.gov/cityrealestate.

Community Partnerships Seek to Boost MPS & UWM

The two largest public education institutions in the city, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Public Schools, are working with community members to improve opportunities for students.

Through a series of meetings including a World Café discussion over the summer, where groups are invited to discuss education ideas over coffee and bagels, the two institutions are looking for areas where they can collaborate to improve student success at both institutions and create a shared culture. The goal is to brainstorm amongst dedicated parents and community members and allow the best ideas to rise to the top.

Alderman Kovac has been a regular participant in the process, and invites anyone with an interest in public education to participate.

"As a proud product of Milwaukee Public Schools, I know firsthand the opportunities and diversity that are available for students in MPS," Alderman Kovac said. "We have good schools in our neighborhoods, but they need our support, they need our creative ideas and they need our confidence."

To learn how to get involved in the next UWM/MPS Community Partnerships meeting, email Laurie Marks at lmarks@uwm.edu or Jasmine Alinder at jalinder@uwm.edu.



Alderman Kovac, along with (left to right) Alderman Willie C. Wade, Fire Chief Mark Rohlfling and Alderman José G. Pérez, were among the invited guests at Mayor Tom Barrett's "State of the City" address on February 24, 2014.

DISTRICT 3

ALDERMAN NIK KOVAC



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WINTER 14



Alderman Kovac joined Mayor Tom Barrett this summer for a walk at the Urban Ecology Center, part of the mayor's "Walk 100 Miles in 100 Days" initiative to encourage Milwaukee families to lead a more active lifestyle and implement physical activity into their daily routines. Visit milwaukee.gov/walk100 to learn more.



Nik Kovac
Alderman, 3rd District
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New Winter Parking Regulations in Effect This Year ➔

New winter parking regulations for much of the East Side are intended to ease the burden on residents who leave their cars in the street, while still enabling city crews to clean up after snow storms. Keep in mind that all posted parking regulations still apply.

However, If you live in the "Five-Day Exception Parking Area" that includes much of the East Side, you may continue to park overnight on both sides of the street unless the city announces that a snow-plow or other public works operation will be conducted overnight. When this announcement is made, residents must move their vehicles immediately to the correct side of the street—the odd-numbered side of the street on an odd-numbered day (before midnight) or the even-numbered side of the street on an even-numbered day (before midnight)—for legal overnight parking.

The Department of Public Works will send a notice to media outlets with the announcement, but residents are also

encouraged to sign up to receive a Snow Mobile Winter Text Alert message. Subscribers will receive a text message on their cell phone alerting them that a DPW operation has been announced and that all vehicles must be moved to the correct side of the street. Those who prefer an email message can select that option instead.

While Alderman Kovac recommends residents sign up for reminders, he offers a mnemonic device to describe the new rules: "When there's new snow on the ground, move your car around. If you can see the curb, you won't be disturbed."

To sign up for either or both alerts, or to check the regulations on your block, go to www.milwaukee.gov/mpw or call (414) 286-CITY for help.

And remember, you need a valid overnight parking permit to park on the street. ■



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www.milwaukee.gov/mkemobile