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AUTUMN 15

Dear Neighbor,

It's that time of year, between the raking of leaves and the pushing of snow, when our thoughts turn to the holidays and the coming of a new year. As we look back on 2015, we should all be proud of the improvements in our neighborhoods. On these pages, you'll learn about new parks, newly paved streets and new plans to make our great retail corridors even better with more residents and more shops.

As great as these visible improvements are, I'd like to draw your attention to some changes we have made at City Hall that are harder to notice, but might have even more of an impact in the long term. The Common Council has made changes to our budgets and our laws in order to craft a more comprehensive, holistic approach to confronting violent crime.

We amended the 2015 budget to create an all-hands-on-deck response to violence. The police still take the lead, but they are assisted by trauma specialists, by building inspectors, by educators and by employers to stop crime where it starts, not just solve it once it happens. In the 2016 budget (which was just approved this month) we have furthered that new direction by bolstering the Office of Violence Prevention within the Health Department, hiring more youth and adults to work summer jobs, and adding more police officers on the street.

We have also taken a hard look at some of the racial disparities in our arrest rates for non-violent crime. Until this year, our police were arresting five times as many black people as white people for possession of less than an ounce of marijuana, even though white people are just as likely to possess it. Clearly this practice was a violation of our core principles of racial justice, as well as an impractical way to stop more serious crimes. In reaction to this, the Common Council voted overwhelmingly to lower the maximum fine for possession of less than an ounce of marijuana from \$500 to \$50. This means our police will write fewer of these tickets and can focus on more serious offenses.

That is just the beginning of a more comprehensive review of all our municipal law enforcement practices. From parking tickets to speeding tickets, we are tracking any possible disparities in enforcement. Our goal will be to enforce all of our laws fairly—and to have the punishments fit the crimes.

Please contact my office with any suggestions you have on how we can make our neighborhoods—and our city—better.

Nik Kovac
Alderman, 3rd District



This summer's MKE Peace Project tasked young people with identifying problems in their neighborhoods and proposing solutions that could be implemented by the city. More than 70 teams, composed of more than 180 students, submitted entries to the contest, and they were reviewed by the Milwaukee Youth Council, a legislative body of high-schoolers that advises the Common Council on issues facing young people. The city is now implementing some of the top ideas, demonstrating to these young leaders how they too can have a hand in reshaping our neighborhoods.

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**CHAIR**

- Finance and Personnel Committee

VICE-CHAIR

- Steering and Rules Committee
- Milwaukee Arts Board

MEMBER

- Zoning, Neighborhoods, and Development Committee
- Licenses Committee
- Library Board
- Deferred Compensation Board
- Capital Improvements Committee

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PARKS AND THE OUTDOORS

Everyone in the 3rd District and beyond knows about Lake Park's epic views and the Milwaukee River Greenway's winding trails. As great as those prominent waterfront parks are, we also have a few neighborhood parks that are new and improved:

New Playground Planned for Snail's Crossing ↗

A popular park in Riverwest will benefit from the MKE Plays Initiative, a citywide public-private partnership to rebuild city playgrounds. Plans are in the works to install new equipment at Snail's Crossing along the east side of Bremen Street between Burleigh and Chambers.

"From its inception, the residents of Riverwest have made this park their own," Alderman Kovac said. "I'm grateful for this opportunity to build on that success while still operating in the spirit of participatory art-making that created Snail's Crossing."

The MKE Plays Initiative has raised more than \$1 million in private funding to help improve 12 playgrounds, and Snail's Crossing has been selected as one of them. A team of local residents—including artist and neighbor Marina Lee—is already meeting to plan the park improvement's. Whatever is done there will match



the creative and community spirit of the existing facilities. If you want to get involved in this planning, or just learn more about the process, visit milwaukee.gov/MKEplays ■

Riverwest an Opportunity for Four-Legged Fun ↗

Long the dream of dog enthusiasts in Riverwest and on the East Side, a new off-leash dog exercise area on the block bounded by E. Concordia and E. Auer Avenues, N. Bremen and N. Weil Streets has opened for business to its canine customers and their bipedal buddies.



Roverwest Dog Park is a collaboration between neighborhood residents, Milwaukee County Parks, Residents for Off-leash Milwaukee Parks, Inc. (ROMP) and Johnson Controls, Inc. The land was previously owned by Johnson Controls, and the company donated it to the county for use as a dog park and even conducted environmental remediation in order to clean up pollution on the site.

"The neighbors in Riverwest have asked for this dog park for years, and we all should thank the county for making this dog-lovers' dream come true," Alderman Kovac said.

The green space is now fully surrounded by a six-foot fence, allowing dogs to play off-leash. A Dog Exercise Area (DEA) permit is required for any dog to be allowed in the park. Learn more at county.milwaukee.gov/Dogs9203.htm. ■

Things Are Swinging Again Under Holton Viaduct ↗

The "swing park" along N. Water Street under the Holton Street Viaduct is alive once again with the convergent energy of Brady Street and Riverwest, following efforts by city crews to improve upon the original "guerilla installation" by a group of local artists.

Originally a social experiment in activating urban space by "beintween" and artist Keith Hayes, the swings that dangled from the bottom of the bridge quickly became a popular local destination and conversation piece. But its popularity took a toll on the improvised equipment, and city engineers became concerned for park users' safety.

"The original swing park was an excellent example of the way a grassroots idea can capture a neighborhood's imagination," Alderman Kovac said. "The swing park belonged to everyone and no one, but someone had to take responsibility for safety in that space."

When city crews began to remove the most deteriorated swings, Alderman Kovac and local residents vowed that they would be replaced. With the cooperation of the Department of Public



Works and Mayor Tom Barrett, crews installed a dozen newer, more reliable swings over the summer, reviving the neighborhood asset in a manner that made it accessible to everyone while guaranteeing that the equipment would be properly maintained.

"The swing park is a wonderful example of a neighborhood taking ownership in activating its every nook and cranny—the kind of urban pioneering that allows Milwaukee to continue to reinvent itself as a city," Alderman Kovac said. ■

TRANSPORTATION AND ROADS

New Options, Smoother Roads Make It Easier to Get Around

By bike, foot or car, new options and improvements are making it easier to get around the East Side and Riverwest, and better connecting our neighborhoods to the rest of the city.

In 2015, crews from the Department of Public Works completed the reconstruction of three major streets in the 3rd Aldermanic District. N. Maryland Avenue was rebuilt from E. Kenwood Avenue to E. Hartford Avenue, and the project included the addition of bike lanes to the road and enhanced midblock crosswalks to improve safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. Stretches of N. Weil Street and E. Hartford Avenue also received similar treatment.

Additionally, E. Newberry Boulevard was resurfaced from N. Oakland Avenue to N. Lake Drive as a part of the popular **High Impact Paving program** that transformed Humboldt Avenue and Brady Street in 2014. The initiative focuses on extending the useful life of local roads by seven to ten years through a

resurfacing process that only takes a day or two to complete. The budget for 2016 includes funds to resurface another 22 miles of roadway through the program.

The popular Beer Line trail that connects Brewer's Hill to Riverwest and Riverwest to Harambee has been extended all the way to Capitol Drive. The addition to the trail makes it even more useful for residents who are looking for ways to run errands without a car.

And finally, the Wisconsin Bike Federation's "Connect 53212" program is now online to connect residents of Riverwest and Harambee with personalized and detailed information on transportation options. The service also offers opportunities to participate in community walks, rides and how-to events to support more residents' use of transportation alternatives. Visit Connect53212.org to learn more. ■

2016 Roadwork Plans

TRADITIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

- N. Maryland Avenue from E. Newberry Boulevard to E. Kenwood Boulevard
- N. Pierce Street from E. Center Street to E. Burleigh Street

HIGH IMPACT PAVING PROGRAM

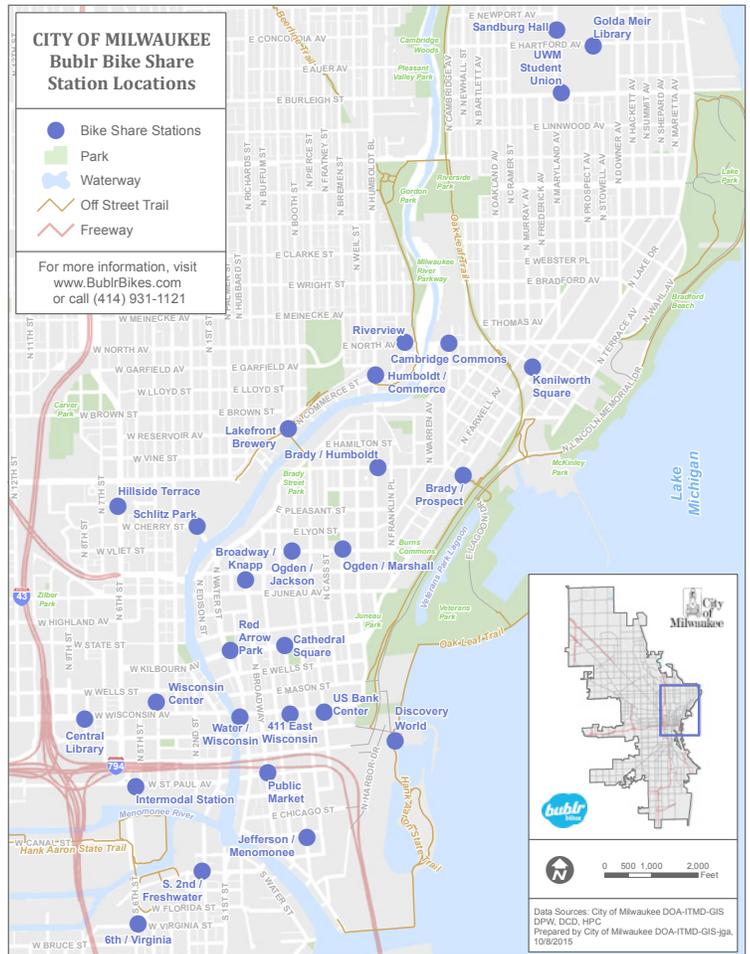
- N. Oakland Avenue from E. Park Place to E. Kenwood Boulevard
- N. Maryland Avenue from E. Hartford Avenue to E. Edgewood Avenue

New Stations Coming to Bubl Bikeshare System

The Bubl Bikeshare system continues to break new ground in Milwaukee, with plans to bring 35 new rental kiosks online by the end of 2016—including more than a dozen on the East Side and in Riverwest.

With the help of a federal grant, the city will bring many of the stations online through its partnership with the nonprofit operator Midwest Bikeshare. And, a new partner on the project, The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, is helping by installing six kiosks on the north and south branches of its campus to help students and visitors get around.

Seventeen new bike stations have already come online this year, with the rest scheduled for installation by the end of 2016. Visit BublBikes.com for more information. ■



Data Sources: City of Milwaukee DOA-ITMD-GIS
 DPW, OGD, HFC
 Prepared by City of Milwaukee DOA-ITMD-GIS-jga,
 10/8/2015



Photo by John December

East Library Success Story Inspiring New Projects

The success of the East Side’s brand new signature library, and the adjacent housing and retail space, is inspiring similar mixed-use projects throughout the city.

“I think the end product has exceeded even our most optimistic expectations,” said Alderman Kovac, a member of the Library Board of Trustees. “The new East Library has proved itself to be a truly transformative project, blending art, community and practicality in a form that’s being imitated, not just throughout the city, but across the country.”

Featuring an 18,000 square-foot library, adjacent street-level retail space, built-in parking and 99 apartments in the complex above, the development known as the Standard at East Library is a new model for a mixed-use, public-private partnership. This same model is now being replicated for the South Side replacement of the Forest Home Library.

With a plan that features 57 market-rate apartments and a state-of-the-art, 16,000 square-foot library facility, the new South Side library will be located in a historic building at 906-910 W. Historic Mitchell St. Architects and contractors will work to preserve and incorporate the building’s historic characteristics into the final product, which they hope will become the beating heart of the Mitchell Street neighborhood. The Villard Square Library at 35th Street was similarly developed a few years before our East Library.

Plans are also in the works to use similar strategies for libraries on Mill Road, W. Locust Street at N. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, and W. Capitol Drive and N. 74th Street. ■

East Side Retail Update

Anchored by time-tested local favorites like **Boswell Books**, **the Oriental** and **the Downer Theatre**, and **Glorioso’s Italian Market**, the retail corridors along Downer and North Avenues and Brady Street are alive with new activity and energy.

Residents can also “vote with their dollars,” Alderman Kovac said, by choosing to support local retailers, especially in the busy holiday season ahead. Such “buy local” efforts are already having a tangible effect, he said, as several new exciting retail developments are planned for the area.

Among these developments are:

- An established consignment shop aimed at providing exposure to fledgling local artists, the **Waxwing** is opening a new location in the mixed-use development at the corner of North and Oakland Avenues. Exhibiting works by more than 100 local artists, the Waxwing features art and handmade gifts made out of refurbished or recycled materials, whenever possible.
- The latest tenant to open up shop in the Overlook on Prospect (the former Prospect Mall) is **Yoga Six**, a yoga studio and retail chain with three studios in Chicago, one in St. Louis and four in California. Yoga Six has leased 4,500 square feet in the renovated building.



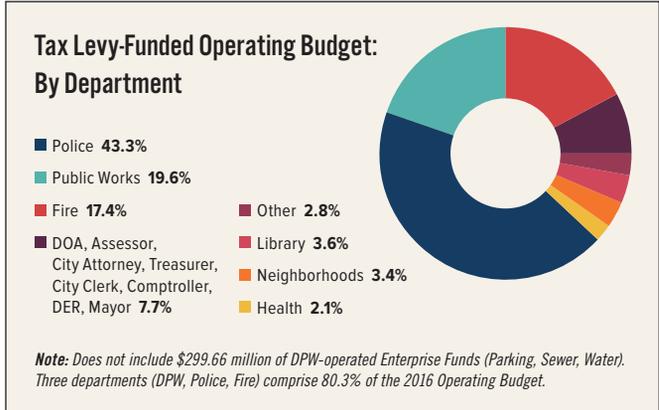
Alderman Kovac has hosted meetings over the past year to gather input from residents and business owners on all of these local main streets. To learn more about the plans from these meetings, visit milwaukee.gov/District3. ■

2016 Budget Focused on Comprehensive Approach to Public Safety

Earlier this month, the Common Council approved a 2016 city budget focused on job creation, economic development, public safety and expanded access to libraries—all while providing tax relief to homeowners. The amended budget funds the hiring of 120 police officers—20 more than the Mayor had originally proposed. But Alderman Kovac, who guided the budget process as chair of the Finance and Personnel Committee, said this spending plan calls upon many city departments—not just MPD—to bring catalytic, positive change in the area of public safety.

“This council recognizes the need for a more comprehensive approach to public safety than just putting more cops on the street, and this budget reflects that,” Alderman Kovac said. “Our renewed focus on providing trauma-informed care to the victims of violent crime, organizing communities to stand up for themselves and generating economic opportunities for everyone will help treat the root causes of crime—not just the symptoms.”

The adopted budget holds steady on the tax levy at \$256.7 million. But with the city’s tax base expanding again in the wake



of the foreclosure crisis, the end result is a slight decline in the tax rate, from \$10.71 to \$10.59 per \$1,000 of assessed value. For a \$104,000 median-valued Milwaukee home of, that would equate to a \$13 tax cut to \$1,101 for the year in city taxes. ■

As a result of amendments made by the Common Council:

- Library branches that were closed on Fridays or Saturdays will be able to reopen on those days.
- An enhanced city Safe Zones initiative will go forward, combating crime by training members of disadvantaged communities to mediate conflicts that can otherwise erupt in violence.
- The city will add seven Police Community Service Officers, non-sworn MPD staffers who make policing more efficient by attending to lower priority calls for service. The new PCSOs will complement the class of 10 PCSOs that is currently training for the program’s launch.
- 20 additional police officers will be hired beyond the 100 proposed by the Mayor.

The budget also:

- Equips all police officers with body-worn video cameras
- Requires police to contribute to their pensions, as other city employees already do
- Includes to replace Forest Home and Mill Road Libraries
- Continues the new trauma-informed care effort, which matches victims of and witnesses to violent crime with the mental health services they need
- Adds two Health Department positions to coordinate efforts to address youth violence
- Directs \$10.9 million toward neighborhood revitalization and stabilization efforts to combat the effects of the foreclosure crisis

Council Cracks Down on Predatory Tow Companies

Horror stories about shady tow truck companies stealing away with cars in the dead of night and holding vehicles hostage for outrageous ransom payments should become a thing of the past, thanks to new legislation spearheaded by Alderman Kovac.

Perhaps most notably, if you come across a truck that is in the process of hooking up to your vehicle, the driver is required to offer you the option of paying a \$50 “drop fee” to get your car back immediately. This allows car owners who made the mistake of briefly parking somewhere they shouldn’t to reclaim their vehicle without the expense or hassle of going to the tow lot.



The new legislation also requires tow truck operators to be licensed to do business in the City of Milwaukee, Alderman Kovac said, in order to track abusive or illegal operators and run them out of business. Residents who believe they have been victimized by a tow truck company will be able to file complaints with the city’s License Division, and companies will be held accountable for any violations when they renew their licenses. ■

Alderman Kovac advises residents to know their rights when it comes to towed vehicles:

- If a tow truck has not begun hooking up to your vehicle, you are allowed to move your vehicle to a legal parking spot without paying any fine.
- If a tow truck has started hooking up to your vehicle, but hasn’t pulled out into traffic yet, you are allowed to pay a \$50 drop fee to reclaim your vehicle. Tow truck drivers must accommodate such a request.
- Tow trucks drivers and companies must accept payment in cash, debit cards or credit cards, and must provide a receipt.
- Tow truck drivers must notify the city before they tow your vehicle. If you suspect your vehicle has been towed, you may call 286-CITY to confirm.
- Milwaukee’s licensed towing companies may not tow your vehicle to a location outside the city.
- According to state law, a towing company must allow you to retrieve any items out of your car, without charging you a fee to do so.
- Tow trucks must be licensed to operate in the City of Milwaukee, and must post their license number on the side of their trucks. If you suspect you have been victimized by an illegal tow operation, call the police immediately. ■

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There Are Great Schools in Your Neighborhood ➤

By Alderman Nik Kovac

We are home to some of the city's finest schools and the largest urban public university in the state. A few months into this new school year, as our children come home with new books, and as our young adults study for the first semester's final exams, it's worth reflecting on the value that public education provides to our community – and thinking about what we can do to support our neighborhood schools.

I am a proud graduate of Riverside University High School. Other quality public schools are right in our back yard, like Fratney, Gaenslen, Pierce, Cass, Hartford and Maryland Avenue Montessori. Even with the prodigious number of schooling options that are available these days, I believe that every family in the 3rd Aldermanic District can find a neighborhood public school to fit their needs and preferences.

And of course, the largest institution of public learning in our neighborhood is the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. UWM provides a path to career success for students from all walks of life, while attracting talent from across the globe to our corner of the world here on Wisconsin's freshwater coast. It's a paragon of accessible higher education, a valuable economic engine, and an assembly of some of our generation's finest minds and ideas, all within a short walk or bike ride from home.

With all of these exceptional educational options tucked into such an inviting environment, it's no small wonder so many of us choose to make our homes on the East Side and in Riverwest. These great schools are a point of civic pride for us, and they deserve our enthusiastic and vocal support. ■