

3rd

DISTRICT

ALDERMAN

# Nik Kovac



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AUTUMN 19

## Dear Neighbors,

From the East Side to Riverwest, from Brady Street through the Milwaukee River Greenway, from Riverside High School to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, the 3rd District is a great place to be. Our neighborhoods are filled with friendly and engaged citizens, our parks are the best in the world, and our commercial corridors are full of new businesses and familiar landmarks still going strong. The Milwaukee Film Festival is now operating the Oriental Theater year-round, Boswell Books and the Downer Theater have both signed long-term leases, and Riverwest now has a diner again: Wonderland on Fratney and Burleigh.

In this newsletter you will find updates on the issues many of us are talking about: environmental justice, public safety, public health, our city budget, and – since this is the season for it – snow plowing and snow parking rules. Over the past several winters we have simplified and liberalized many of those rules, but the sheer density of cars on our streets makes it a challenge for all of us to find a legal street spot for our vehicles, and for the snow plow drivers to clear the parking lanes if we are parked on the wrong side.

Your feedback has driven many of these changes, and we want to keep hearing from you about how we can better deliver city services. I am proud to work with thousands of dedicated city employees who pick up our trash, smooth our streets, deliver clean water, keep the lights on, and keep us safe and healthy. We all work best when we get feedback from the neighbors we work for, so please let us know if you have ideas about how we can improve, or if you have specific complaints that you want immediately addressed. Thank you for caring about our neighborhoods and working to make them better.

Let's continue building Milwaukee's future together.

Sincerely,

Nik Kovac  
Alderman, 3rd District



**NIK KOVAC**

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## What is the City Doing to Save the Planet?

The short answer to that question is: as much as we can, but not nearly enough.

Unfortunately the state and federal governments and our local utility company have tried to block much of our efforts, but we are fighting back. Here's how:

- In 2017, when the federal government unilaterally pulled out of an international agreement to reduce carbon emissions, Alderman Kovac co-sponsored file #170337 which re-affirmed that “Milwaukee will continue to stand with cities throughout the world to advance action in accordance with the goals outlined in the Paris Climate Accord.” Similar laws were passed in 246 cities across our country.
- In 2018, at the last possible minute, our local utility company - We Energies - intervened to procedurally block the production of a megawatt of solar energy with solar panels on seven city buildings. Despite this obstruction, in 2019 Milwaukee was still able to install panels on three of our library roofs, generating about a third of the power originally planned. Milwaukee has also joined a lawsuit against We Energies to force the state to allow the rest of the project to go forward.



- In 2016, former Governor Walker signed a law that preemptively prevented all Wisconsin municipalities from banning or regulating single-use plastic containers. Our current Governor Evers would veto such a law, but the old law remains on the books. Our only legal options remaining are to regulate non-container plastics, and so Alderman Kovac has co-sponsored, along with Alderman Cavalier Johnson, file #190942 which would ban single-use plastic straws except for persons with disabilities.



## PLASTIC FREE MKE

*Who is Plastic Free MKE? We're your neighbors! Passionate community members, small business owners, engineers, agencies, local non-profits—all make up the Plastic-Free MKE coalition. Together with other local community groups Plastic-Free MKE is working to eliminate single-use plastics from businesses and individuals in our city. For more information, visit [plasticfreemke.org](http://plasticfreemke.org)*

## What You Can Do to Help the City

Milwaukee is working hard to meet its diversion from landfill goals for our household waste, and these 4 steps will help us do that:

Before you put it in the recycling bin

1. Flatten all cardboard boxes
2. Empty and rinse all containers
3. Make sure it's loose (don't bag it)
4. Remove all plastic bags (they jam the sorting equipment at our facility)



*On September 20, 2019, as part of a global day of climate action, Alderman Kovac marched with over a thousand Milwaukee neighbors from City Hall to the Water Tower on North Avenue. Alderman Kovac also co-sponsored legislation supporting federal efforts to create a Green New Deal, and he is the co-chair of the newly formed City-County Task Force on Climate and Economic Equity.*

## Getting Around Our City Safely

Whether you're walking, driving a car, pedaling a bike, or riding public transportation, you deserve to get where you're going safely.

When conditions on our roads, trails, or sidewalks are not safe, this is sometimes caused by reckless driving, and sometimes by bad street design.

### Here's What the City is Doing About It:

#### Traffic Enforcement

To prevent reckless driving, our new Chief of Police, Alfonso Morales, has increased our traffic enforcement patrols since he took over the department in early 2018.

If you think reckless driving is still a recurrent issue on a particular block or intersection, contact Alderman Kovac at **286-3765** or the police non-emergency desk at **933-4444** and ask for patrols of that area.

#### Street Design Improvements

In 2010 the State of Wisconsin implemented a “**Complete Streets**” policy which required all new road designs to consider the safety of all modes of transportation, not just cars. Unfortunately, former Governor Walker eliminated that policy as part of his 2015 budget. The City of Milwaukee responded with a 2018 resolution - co-sponsored by Alderman Kovac - that created our own “**Complete Streets**” Ordinance.

*Here are some examples in our neighborhoods of what “Complete Streets” can mean:*

1. We have put the **North Avenue** and **Locust Street** bridges over the Milwaukee River on what is sometimes called a “road diet” but in the case of these thoroughfares is really just lining up the lanes with the road widths on either side of the river. This has created more room for bikers on the street and pedestrians on the sidewalk, and prevented cars from speeding up to pass on the right. Since this was implemented the number of people driving over 40mph on the bridges is down by 50% on **North Ave** and 70% on **Locust St**, and bicycle use of the bridges has more than doubled.
2. West of the river we will be installing the **Fratney** and **Wright Street** Greenways in 2020. This will be a mixture of speed bumps, roundabouts, bump-outs, and well-marked crosswalks designed to slow all traffic down on these residential streets. Exactly which feature goes where is being decided at a series of community meetings. To provide your input on this project please

email [bikewalk@milwaukee.gov](mailto:bikewalk@milwaukee.gov) or call **286-8750**.

3. East of the river, also in 2020, we will be re-stripping Lake Drive to better match the new lane configuration that Shorewood has implemented north of Edgewood. These changes will slow vehicle speeds, reduce crashes, and make it easier for pedestrians to cross.



*Alderman Kovac held a press conference on Locust Street last summer to discuss the state of streets and traffic on Milwaukee's East Side.*



*An improved pedestrian and bike corridor coming to this intersection via the Fratney Greenway program in 2020*

## The Milwaukee Health and Water Departments' Response to Elevated Lead Levels in Our Children's Blood

In the 1990s, when it finally became routine practice for most young children to have their blood tested for lead, the numbers in Milwaukee were startling. Nearly 40% of our children had high levels.

Starting in 1996, the Milwaukee Water Works began adding orthophosphate to our drinking water, which reduces the ability for lead in pipes to enter the water as it travels through service lines and interior plumbing. The recent uptick in lead cases in Flint, Michigan and Newark, New Jersey were caused by their water departments failing to properly reduce corrosion in pipes by adding treatments, such as orthophosphate.

In 1997 the Milwaukee Health Department also began a partnership with the federal government, which involved intensive lead paint remediation for any home in which children with elevated blood lead levels were living or visiting regularly. In just over 20 years this program has remediated lead hazards in 18,148 homes in Milwaukee.



Since 2010 the number of Milwaukee children with high levels of lead is now less than 4%.

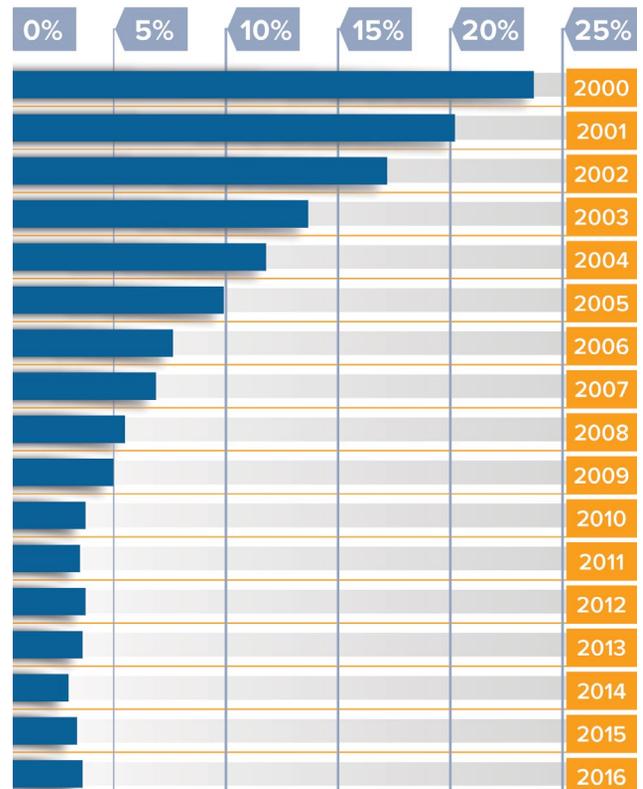
Two years ago it was revealed that our Health Department was not regularly getting the lead paint removed from houses where children had high blood levels. This resulted in our Health Commissioner getting fired and the loss of millions in federal grant money due to our own incompetence.

Since then, Commissioner Jeanette Kowalik has taken over the Health Department and these scandalous oversights have been corrected. On October 3, 2019 it was announced that the federal grant money has been returned to Milwaukee and will continue funding the abatement of lead paint hazards.

While it is clear from all the relevant data (in Milwaukee and nationally) that the primary vector of lead poisoning is paint in our old homes (especially in the windowsills), there are still nonzero amounts of lead in the water of many of our old homes. The orthophosphates reduce the lead levels in drinking water, but the only way to get it to zero is to remove all lead service lines from under our front lawns and all lead pipes from inside our walls.

We are aggressively looking for funding to make that replacement happen more quickly, and to make sure that filters are available to all households that might be at risk. If you would like to learn more about how you can protect your children from the risk of lead poisoning, please go to [LeadSafeMKE.com](http://LeadSafeMKE.com).

### Lead Levels of City of Milwaukee Children Under 6 Years Old



**What this visualization shows us:** The percent of children under 6 years old who had their first blood lead test with results greater than or equal to 10 mcg/dL during the year reported.

## Investing in a Safer City

In the last two years, homicides in our city are down by 20% and nonfatal shootings are down by 29% compared to their peaks in 2017. While these statistical reductions represent important progress, the raw numbers are still tragic: 74 people were murdered in our city and 328 were struck by gunfire in the first ten months of 2019. This is a public health crisis and a moral crisis.

In 2015, via a budget amendment introduced by Alderman Kovac, the

city began an intervention program known as Trauma Informed Care. There are now social workers working side by side with police officers in the districts with the highest rates of gun violence, offering immediate mental health services to the victims of and witnesses to violent crimes.

This expanding effort aims to intervene in the cycle of violence and create an atmosphere of healing. It is one part of a larger plan called Milwaukee's Blueprint

For Peace. To learn more about this important initiative, please go to [city.milwaukee.gov/414Life/Blueprint](http://city.milwaukee.gov/414Life/Blueprint).



## What We're Up Against

One of the most effective ways we could reduce gun violence is by reducing the easy access to deadly weapons in our community. Unfortunately, our federal government refuses to take any steps in this direction—and our state government, back in 2011 and 2015, actually passed a series of laws that made it easier to get guns and harder for law enforcement to collect data on their use.

This is a profound moral failing from our elected leaders in Washington and Madison, but it is the daily reality we face here in Milwaukee. Most close observers of politics do not expect it to change anytime soon.

We still have ways of using the tools we do have - especially the hard-working employees of our Police and Health Departments - to make the necessary interventions, each and every day, to reduce violence in our communities. Our investments in those areas are getting smarter thanks to the strategic leadership of Chief Alfonso Morales in the Police Department and Reggie Moore in the Office of Violence Prevention.

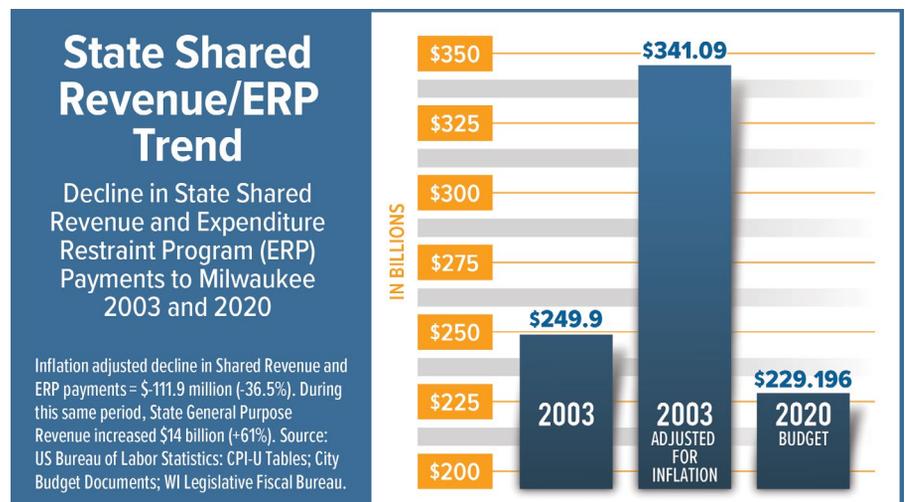
But the amount of those investments is seriously limited by two main structural problems in our annual budget process:

1. The state government is no longer giving us our fair share of the income and sales taxes we pay. Adjusted for inflation, we receive over \$100 million less than we did just over fifteen years ago. (see [graph below](#))
2. Due to changes in forecasts for global growth, even though our pension fund has more assets now than it ever has (over \$5 billion), the city must begin significantly increasing our contributions to that fund in order to be sure we can meet our future obligations. The current

annual bill for the city is about \$80 million, but within three years, based on current forecasts, that number could double or even triple.

Added together, those losses and costs could end up being more than half of our annual operating budget.

Given that stark fiscal reality, the city is going to need a coordinated regional approach (that eventually should include cooperation from elected leaders in Washington and Madison) in order to reasonably manage our budgets in the coming years.



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In October Alderman Kovac joined Mayor Tom Barrett, Alderman José Pérez, Alderwoman Chantia Lewis and members of the Ho Chunk, Oneida and Potawatomi nations for the signing of the Indigenous Peoples' Day legislation at City Hall. The second Monday in October will now be recognized as Indigenous Peoples' Day throughout Milwaukee. Alderman Kovac was a co-sponsor of the legislation.

## Winter Parking - Help the Plows Clear Our Streets

Over the past several years, Alderman Kovac has been working with neighbors and our Department of Public Works to simplify our winter parking rules.

That means we can park on both sides of most streets most nights of the year with these exceptions:

1. First and foremost, follow all posted regulations. Due to the narrowness of some streets, there are still streets with a posted December 1 – March 1 restriction.
2. Certain bus routes prohibit overnight parking December 1 – March 1. Please check restrictions at [milwaukee.gov/winterparking](http://milwaukee.gov/winterparking) or call **286-CITY (2489)**.
3. Snow emergency rules will be in effect every time a snow fall requires a plow operation. Snow emergencies require alternate side night parking. If the snow emergency is called on an even date prior to 10pm, park on the even side of the street. If called on an odd date prior to 10pm, park on the odd side of the street. You can sign up for parking text alerts at [milwaukee.gov/parking](http://milwaukee.gov/parking).

The implementation of the new Snow Emergency rules will affect a number of major streets that were previously not required to alternate sides of the street for night parking during a snow plow operation. These streets include Brady Street, Ogden Ave, Oakland Ave, Maryland Ave, Prospect Ave, Farwell Ave, Downer Ave, Bradford between Maryland and Downer, Park Pl. between Maryland and Oakland, Cambridge Ave between Brady and Oakland, and Van Buren Street between Ogden and Brady. Alternating parking on these streets will allow DPW to clear snow on these busier thoroughfares.

Starting this winter, the fines for each vehicle violating the alternate side rule will escalate after the first offense. After the third citation, your vehicle could be towed. Compliance with Winter Parking regulations is important and we appreciate your cooperation.

As in years past, certain MPS lots and city owned parking lots will open for night parking during snow emergencies. That list of availability can be found at [milwaukee.gov/snowparking](http://milwaukee.gov/snowparking).