

## NEWSBITES

### **Bike share program gets rolling in Minneapolis**

Minneapolis is recognized as one of the most bikeable cities in the United States. Now, it's home to the nation's largest bike sharing system in the country.

The system, called Nice Ride Minnesota, began providing wheels to bicyclists this month. There are around a thousand bikes available at 75 kiosks located throughout downtown Minneapolis, the University of Minneapolis campus and in a number of nearby areas. Subscribers to the Nice Ride service can check out a bike, pedal around town, then return the bike to any of the other kiosks. An annual subscription to Nice Ride costs \$60 (\$50 for students) and includes coupons worth up to \$500 to local retailers and eateries that operate within the service area.

Nice Ride Minnesota is a nonprofit organization created to bring public bike sharing to the metro area. It receives major financial support of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota and Transit for Livable Communities' Bike Walk Twin Cities program.

For more information on Nice Ride Minnesota, including a map of kiosk locations, go to [www.niceridemn.org](http://www.niceridemn.org).

### **Invest in trees, not insecticides, to fight emerald ash borer**

Now that the emerald ash borer has made its way into Minneapolis, many residents are searching for ways to prevent the spread of this invasive species. That's raising concerns that insecticides will be overused, which can cause more damage to our urban environment.

The emerald ash borer is a beetle accidentally introduced from Asia. Its larvae tunnel into the wood of ash trees and feed on the inner bark, ultimately killing the tree. It has already killed more than 40 million ash trees nationwide and can be found in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, and Maryland; and Ontario and Quebec, Canada. In February, signs of the insect were detected in ash trees here in Minneapolis for the first time.

The City Council recently passed a resolution encouraging residents not to apply insecticides to their trees to guard against emerald ash borer. This kind of treatment is not expected to be successful in the long run. Results in other cities indicate that all ash trees in the region are likely to die from the beetle even when insecticides are used. Plus, insecticides sprayed on trees can eventually wash off trees and end up in our lakes, creeks and the Mississippi River, affecting people and wildlife.

Instead of using insecticides, the Council urged residents to focus limited resources on growing the next generation of trees and preserving the long-term health of the ecosystem. Do your part by planting diverse tree, bush and native grass species, and replacing both infested and non-infested ash trees with other tree species.

Also, in an effort to slow the beetle's spread, a state quarantine on firewood, ash trees, and ash tree products is in effect for Hennepin, Ramsey and Houston counties. Burn firewood where you buy it; do not transport firewood. Also, don't prune any ash trees on your property until the fall or winter. The emerald ash borer is active in the spring and summer, and moving infected wood helps spread the pest. Prune your ash tree only when the beetle is dormant, after Labor Day and before May 1.

### **"Living Well" sustainability report shows successes, challenges**

Asthma hospitalizations are down in Minneapolis – especially among children under 5, miles of bikeways are up, and Minneapolis is three sites away from its 2014 goal on cleaning up polluted land so that it can be redeveloped. These are some of the ways Minneapolis is making progress toward becoming a more vital, livable city, according to Living Well, the City's 2010 sustainability report. The report, which was presented to the City Council's Public Safety and Health Committee, also shows a number of challenges the city faces in becoming more sustainable.

In its fifth year of publishing the Living Well report, the City of Minneapolis continues upgrading its business practices in ways that will systematically improve the city's ecological, economic and

social systems. New indicators added this year will start tracking progress on community engagement, arts and the economy, and employment and poverty.

Minneapolis successes tracked in the report include:

- Meeting the teen pregnancy target
- Inspecting all the homes of children with lead poisoning for the first time in Minneapolis history, and a decrease in the number of kids found to have lead poisoning
- Meeting the target for no combined sewer overflows for the third year in a row
- Expanding a pilot residential organics composting program to a second neighborhood
- Engaging more than 100 residents in Homegrown Minneapolis, a focused approach to expanding efforts to grow, sell, distribute and consume more fresh, sustainably produced and locally grown foods
- Completing the downtown Marquette and Second avenues transit project providing side-by-side bus-only lanes for less idling of buses in downtown, decreased stormwater runoff, more efficient lighting and new trees

Despite these advances, the city also continues to face a number of challenges that will require more efforts to resolve. Only half the resident population is at a healthy weight, the number of families and individuals in shelters is increasing, and 10 percent of employed residents live in poverty. This report allows Minneapolis leaders to track what is working and what isn't, in order to redirect resources to where they are needed most.

Living Well takes stock of the City's work on sustainability indicators, which measure our progress on measures ranging from air quality and solar power, to healthy infants and jobs. The report tracks targets, trends and recent activities related to the indicators, which allows Minneapolis to measure its progress and match actions with goals. The report is now available at [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability).

Minneapolis continues to receive recognition for its sustainability work. Minneapolis was recently ranked the sixth most eco-city in the world, best bicycling city in the United States, one of the top U.S. time-saving cities (reflecting our livability), the seventh least wasteful city in the nation, in the top five in a national well-being survey, and one of 10 greenest cities in the country.

## **Keep tap water with you to fight the summer heat**

Summer is here, and that means everyone will be spending more time outside enjoying the nice weather. We want you to stay cool and hydrated with the temperatures climb, so make sure to bring a water bottle filled with Minneapolis tap water wherever you go.

Minneapolis tap water is safe, great tasting and at less than half a cent a gallon it's very economical. Our water goes through hundreds of tests a day, making it among the best tap water in the nation.

Fill a water bottle with tap water before leaving home. When it's empty, you can fill it back up at a drinking fountain. We have portable drinking fountains that will be popping up around town all summer. You can find out about where they are by becoming a fan or follower of us on Facebook and Twitter:

- [www.facebook.com/tapmpls](http://www.facebook.com/tapmpls)
- [www.twitter.com/tapmpls](http://www.twitter.com/tapmpls)

By filling a water bottle instead of buying single-use water bottles, you help conserve energy and reduce waste. Bottled water needs to be packaged at a factory and shipped to customers like you. The bottles are discarded once the water is consumed. Minneapolis tap water comes straight to homes and offices without the needless use of these resources. For more information on Minneapolis tap water, go to [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/water](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/water).

## **Metro area tops in the nation for volunteering**

For the fourth year in a row, the Minneapolis Saint Paul metro area has been ranked the top metro in the nation for volunteering by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that uses Census Bureau data to rank cities across the country.

The report found that despite the current economic conditions, 37.4 percent of Minneapolis Saint Paul residents or about 905,000 volunteers serve in their communities. Volunteers averaged 43.9 hours per resident, ranking them first within the 51 largest cities surveyed. And by donating their time, the report estimates that metro area volunteers make an economic contribution of \$2.2 billion annually.

The study found several factors contribute to Minneapolis' high volunteer rates: shorter commutes to work, higher home ownership, higher education levels, and higher concentrations of nonprofit organizations providing opportunities to volunteer.

Following Minneapolis Saint Paul, were Portland, Salt Lake City, Seattle, and Oklahoma City rounding out the top five large cities for volunteerism. Minnesota once again was the third-highest ranked state for volunteering, following Utah and Iowa. For more information on the study, visit [www.volunteeringinamerica.gov](http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov).

### **City hires an internal auditor to increase accountability**

The Minneapolis City Council's Audit Committee has approved the appointment of Magdy Mossaad to the position of Internal Auditor. In this job, Mossaad will head the City's newly created Department of Internal Audit, which will plan, direct, and coordinate the internal audit strategy for the City of Minneapolis, including all City departments, boards, and commissions.

Mossaad is currently a Senior Auditor for the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, and has worked at the clinic for 10 years. Prior to that time, he worked in accounting, finance, and auditing in Ohio and overseas in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. He is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Certified Internal Auditor (CIA), and Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE). He has completed his Master of Business Administration from the University of Minnesota – Duluth.

Last year, the City Council approved creating the Department of Internal Audit to triple the capacity of the City's internal audit function. Mossaad and two other auditors will report to the newly formed Audit Committee, which is composed of three City Council members and three residents appointed by the Mayor, the City Council and the Park and Recreation Board.

Among its key functions, the new department will develop an annual audit plan and establish guidelines, policies, and procedures for conducting internal audits. It will also supervise audit activities and closely examine how City financial resources are being deployed to identify opportunities for improving how the City operates.