

Dear Neighbors,

As I thought about what to share with you this month, I noticed a theme: Environmental impact. I know that "being green" is of great concern to many of you, and I'm always looking for ways to help protect the environment.

I'm delighted that the Common Council recently adopted a resolution I sponsored requiring any new or substantially renovated City-owned buildings to be certified as a green building at the silver level under the LEED[®] (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standard.

Building green is the right thing to do, for many reasons. It will save the City money by ensuring that any new City buildings are built to be as energy- and water-efficient as possible. LEED[®] certified buildings use on average 30% less energy than average buildings. In addition to energy, LEED[®] buildings reduce average water use by 40%, waste by 65% and harmful greenhouse gas emissions by 30%. Green buildings are healthier for those working in them, as well. The City will benefit from improved employee attraction and retention, not to mention reduced health care costs and the increased morale that comes from working in a cleaner environment.

I agree with Mayor Dave Cieslewicz, who said, "The City needs to lead by example. We can't realistically expect others to embrace energy efficiency unless we step up to the plate and embrace it ourselves."

Another environmental issue on my mind is our drinking water. By the time you read this, we should have a new general manager at the Water Utility. I sincerely hope that whoever we hire will, first and foremost, reform the way the Utility communicates with the public. We need more and better information, and we need to know that our concerns and complaints are being taken seriously. Beyond that, we obviously still need to address the wells that have high manganese levels, and we need to look at how we site new wells, especially how we involve the public in that process. Proposals on both of these fronts are working their way through the system, and I'm sure Eastside Water Board member Dan Melton will help keep us all up to date on what's going on.

Last, but most definitely not least, is the quality of our lakes. This is a perennially frustrating issue, but one I hope we can continue to make progress on. I've been reminded of it most recently in the context of salt use. We've had an incredibly snowy winter, which raises everyone's awareness about snow removal and salt use. I hope we as a city have struck a good balance between safety and environmental quality with the amount of salt we use, and I wish our neighboring municipalities would rethink their policies. Hopefully, the work that Aids. Rummel, Konkel and myself continue to do on snow removal will help as well.

As always, I'm eager to hear what's on your mind, and what's happening in your neighborhoods. Please don't hesitate to contact me.

Stay warm!
Satya