



## City Council passes electronic cigarette ordinance

In 2014, the Minnesota Legislature passed a state law banning the use of electronic cigarettes in select places such as schools, child and health care facilities, government buildings, along with a few other facilities. To ensure clean air in additional public places, the Minneapolis City Council updated its own clean indoor air ordinance in December 2014. The new ordinance prohibits electronic cigarette use in all indoor public places in Minneapolis, including stores, restaurants and other worksites. The ordinance does not restrict electronic cigarette sampling in exclusive tobacco and electronic cigarette shops that restrict people under the age of 18 from entering.

To help restaurants and businesses inform patrons of the new law, the Minneapolis Health Department mailed them free window decals (see image below) that indicate prohibition of all indoor smoking. More than two dozen establishments requested additional stickers.

The updated ordinance reflects months of preparation by the Minneapolis Health Department. In a survey, 58 percent of Minneapolis food establishment owners and managers supported amending the city ordinance to prohibit the public, indoor use of e-cigarettes. The Minneapolis Youth Congress recommended this action as a strategy for reducing exposure to potentially harmful vapor and preventing the normalization and use of electronic cigarettes among young people. For more information, contact Lara Pratt at 612-673-3815 or [lara.pratt@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:lara.pratt@minneapolismn.gov).



## Public Health Advisory Committee presents annual report to City Council

Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) co-chairs, Karen Soderberg and Jennifer Pelletier, recently presented the 2014 Annual Report to the Health, Environment & Community Engagement committee. In 2014, the PHAC aligned many of its' key activities and learning items with Health Department goals and initiatives including: School-ready children, Access to Healthy Foods, Smoke-Free Living, and Preventing Youth Violence. Committee members also learned about the complexities of Housing (funding and development), hoarding behavior, and studied local and statewide breastfeeding initiatives.

Actions included: hosting a panel discussion on breastfeeding with representatives from four area hospitals; commissioning a study by a Master's student at the University of Minnesota-School of Public Health on cultural and structural barriers to breastfeeding in selected cultural communities; and providing support and testimony for the Staple Foods Ordinance, the Minneapolis Youth Congress Tobacco Initiative recommendations, and regulating e-cigarettes in accordance to the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act.

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## Improving public health through healthier homes

The City of Minneapolis recently wrapped up its three-year \$1,860,000 grant to abate health and safety defects in more than 200 single family homes. Assistance was provided to homeowners who were physically or financially unable to complete critical home repairs due to limited incomes, disabilities, health problems, or other hardships. Above and beyond protecting residents from injury and illness, the grant kept properties from being condemned and forcing residents into possible homelessness, along with allowing elderly residents to stay in their homes to “age in place.”

The HUD Healthy Homes Thriving Communities funds were used to mitigate home hazards that posed serious health risks by budgeting \$5,000 for each house; additional funds were used for lead abatement, as needed. Using HUD’s Healthy Home Rating System, Minneapolis Health Department staff identified home health risks such as the lack of insulation leading to roof dams and mold/moisture problems, as well as electrical hazards; plumbing leaks or shut-off; missing gas lines; asbestos on boilers and in vermiculite; high radon levels; missing handrails; missing or broken gutters; foundation problems; and lead paint. A few homeowners were helped that had long-standing City housing citations related to hoarding, inoperative plumbing, or dangerous electrical systems.

Collaborating with community-based organizations, the Minneapolis Health Department brought a team approach to fixing serious housing defects, giving homeowners double the value of a single-agency approach by sharing the work across several funding sources. Partners that provided matching funds were Project for Pride in Living, Sustainable Resources Center, Habitat for Humanity, and several weatherization providers, while many more community organizations provided significant in-kind contributions. The health department also partnered with the City’s Homeowner Navigation Program, which helps seniors and veterans who are disabled and/or low-income address housing violations. For more information, please contact Eliza Schell at 612-673-2606 or [eliza.schell@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:eliza.schell@minneapolismn.gov).



## URBAN HEALTH AGENDA: City ordinance on eco-friendly food packaging takes effect on Earth Day

The City of Minneapolis is one step closer to its goal to be a zero-waste city by Earth Day, April 22, 2015. The date also marks when the City’s new Environmentally Acceptable Packaging Ordinance will go into effect requiring food and beverages prepared for immediate consumption and to-go to be placed in environmentally-acceptable packaging. Relevant materials must also be recyclable and compostable.

The updated rules affect all businesses, events and people who serve or give away food that is prepared to be eaten immediately. The change will affect packaging at restaurants; grocery store deli cases; food trucks and other mobile vendors; and temporary, short-term and seasonal-food vendors. The change that will be most noticeable is that food and beverages will no longer be served or packaged “to go” in expanded polystyrene (commonly known as Styrofoam™) and plastics marked as #6.

The Minneapolis Health Department is helping businesses become compliant with the new ordinance. A Packaging Fair for Food Businesses on March 12, 2015, will give businesses the opportunity to talk with distributors and manufacturers to learn about acceptable packaging; learn more about the City’s recycling grants, and much more. Eureka Recycling, a Minneapolis Health Department partner, will review products at the fair for compliance and provide zero-waste management of the event as a means for the Health Department to lead by example.

To help promote compliant businesses, a “Green To Go” brand and logo was developed for businesses to feature as a window cling in their marketing materials, and will be available soon.

At this time, certain products are exempt from the ordinance such as knives, forks, spoons and straws because there are no reasonable alternatives. Exemptions also apply to lids for polyethylene-lined hot cups and containers such as coffee and soup containers. Polyethylene-lined paper products are exempt until Earth Day 2017 to allow for full citywide implementation of organics collections. Exemptions will be reviewed annually.

If a business believes they cannot find a reasonable alternative for a packaging product they can apply for a variance by contacting their City health inspector.

For more information on this initiative, please contact Leslie Foreman at 612-673-3544 or [leslie.foreman@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:leslie.foreman@minneapolismn.gov).



Before (left) and after (right) photos of a property nearly condemned due to excessive storage, unsanitary conditions, pest infestation, and nonworking appliances. The family, some with severe health conditions, lacked the finances to find a new place to live. HUD Healthy Homes Thriving Communities funding provided a major cleanup of the home and yard, plumbing and electrical repairs, and pest management.

## Cradle to K Cabinet Plan released for public comment

The Cradle to K Cabinet, Mayor Hodges' initiative to address disparities among Minneapolis children through early childhood interventions, released a draft report of recommendations in January. The initiative is focused on providing all Minneapolis children with a healthy start, stable housing, and seamless access to high-quality child care and early education. This work will build on Minneapolis Health Department programs like Healthy Start; nurse home visiting; support for teen parents; and early childhood screening.

The Cabinet's report is based on best practices, an inventory of existing successful programs, and identified gaps in services. The draft recommendations are as follows.

### **Goal 1: All children ages birth to three will receive a healthy start rich with early experiences that prepare them for successful early education and literacy.**

- Increase early childhood screening at age three.
- Improve mental health services of children birth to three.
- Decrease the "word gap" of children birth to three.
- Expand targeted home visiting services.
- Increase community awareness and engagement in the importance of early childhood development.

### **Goal 2: All children are stably housed.**

- Increase housing options for the lowest income families at 30% Area Median Income.
- Target funding to address the needs of homeless children and families to improve their stability while on the path to housing.
- Provide resources for very-low income families to become economically stable.

### **Goal 3: All children ages birth to three have continuous access to high-quality child development centered care.**

- Ensure that low-income families have access to financial resources to afford high-quality early learning programs.
- Increase the number of available high-quality child care slots in Minneapolis.
- Partner with family, friend and neighbor providers to ensure that the children they serve are prepared for kindergarten.

Several policy recommendations from the Cabinet's work have already been incorporated into the City's legislative priorities such as expanding funding for evidence-based and culturally-relevant home visiting services; scholarships for early learning opportunities and child care assistance; and more automatic eligibility for early intervention services for homeless children.

The Cabinet's draft report will be shared through public forums to solicit feedback and comments can also be submitted at [Cradle2K@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:Cradle2K@minneapolismn.gov). A final plan will be released later this spring.

## Providing babies with safe sleeping conditions

City health inspectors conducting home inspections for health and safety hazards are now distributing portable cribs to families in need. As they were carrying out home inspections, City staff noticed babies and young children were often sleeping with their parents or in unsafe sleeping conditions because they did not have a crib. A dangerous practice, co-sleeping with babies and young children increases the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), suffocation from soft bedding, and being smothered by parents during sleep. To address this need, the Minneapolis Health Department's Healthy Homes and Lead unit partnered with the Healthy Start Program to provide portable cribs (see photo) to families. Health inspectors also train families on how to set up the cribs; provide sleep sacks as a safe alternative to blankets; and review safe sleep tips such as placing babies on their backs. To date, the program has given out 12 cribs.



### **Gretchen Musicant, Health Commissioner**

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## HEALTHY CITY UPDATES:

### New Funding Awards:

- **The Minnesota Department of Health** has awarded the Minneapolis Health Department a four-year, \$2,892,982 contract to implement community- and clinic-based strategies to prevent obesity, diabetes, heart disease and stroke. Pending City Council approval, the Minneapolis Health Department will develop partnerships with community and health care settings to increase healthy behaviors through environmental change; build support for the National Diabetes Prevention Program, improve clinical care delivery for people with hypertension and pre-diabetes; and improve linkages between clinical and community resources.
- **UCare** is funding a one-year, \$25,000 grant to reduce environmental asthma triggers for children with uncontrolled asthma. Prevention efforts include providing families with an air purifier, dehumidifier, pest management resources, an allergen vacuum, and bedding encasements to eliminate common household asthma triggers. This effort builds on best practices asthma care for children with asthma that has been shown to reduce health care costs including emergency room visits, hospitalizations and school absenteeism.

### Data on neighborhood health now available to public

The health department has launched an online Health Indicator Tool that provides information about the physical, social and economic conditions of community health in Minneapolis. With data on more than 40 indicators available by neighborhood, the tool can be used for strategic planning, policy development, civic engagement and performance monitoring. The Health Indicator Tool was developed as part of a three-year pilot for the Healthy Communities Transformation Initiative to fill a growing need for comprehensive and nationally-relevant health indicators. Minneapolis is one of only four pilot cities in the nation selected by Healthy Housing Solutions Inc. and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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### Staff Updates:

#### New Employees:

**Ahmed Hashi** is a temporary Environmental Inspector I with experience planning, sampling and analyzing air quality in India and Bangladesh. He has a degree in public health from San Diego State University.

**Amanda Lee** is a Food, Lodging and Pools Health Inspector who has worked with Anoka County Environmental Services. She has a bachelor's degree in sociology and anthropology from the University of North Dakota and a Master in Public Health - Environmental Health.

**Eduardo Mardones** is a Food, Lodging and Pools Health Inspector with a veterinarian background trained in infectious, parasitic and zoonotic diseases. He recently attended school at Virginia Tech University and the University of Minnesota.

**Roe Reinberg** is a Food, Lodging and Pools Health Inspector with a bachelor's degree in Mandarin Chinese from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and a Master in Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Jeremy Shields** is a Food, Lodging and Pools Health Inspector with a bachelor's and master's in Environmental Science from the University of Texas, San Antonio and a degree in Culinary Arts. He has experience as a chef, corporate kitchen trainer and science teacher.

#### School Based Clinic interns:

**Tracy Smith** is providing mental health services at the South School Based Clinic. She is a graduate of St. Mary's University of Minnesota's Marriage and Family Therapy program.

**Ashley Bemmels** is providing mental health services at the Southwest School Based Clinic. She is a graduate of the University of Minnesota's Social Work program.