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CITY GOALS:



Strong Foundation



Reliable Service



Livable City



Better Together

Engineering Employee Takes on Challenge to Help Residents

City Bottles and Distributes Hand Sanitizer to Those in Need



Project Engineer Charlie Gerk works to label and fill bottles with hand sanitizer. Photo by Scott Denfeld

BY KAYLIN EIDSNESS

Project Engineer Charlie Gerk was training for a 5K last year when his knees started to ache. He understood that feeling sore after working out wasn't uncommon and didn't think much of it at first. However, when the pain in one knee wouldn't go away, he knew something was wrong. Three months later, Gerk was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma, a cancer of the bones.

Gerk had surgery to successfully remove the cancer and chemotherapy followed. His last scan in February showed the cancer is gone. Even so, Gerk knows he's considered high-risk during this pandemic.

"During treatments I got a monthly delivery of hand sanitizer and I'm grateful for that," said Gerk. "If I hadn't had that, I would have been freaking out. As of March, the area's supply of hand sanitizer was non-existent."

As an engineer, Gerk is used to solving problems. After reading a story about distilleries producing ethanol-based sanitizers and a brief conversation with two of his friends who know the liquor and bottling industry, he realized that

he could help get hand sanitizer in the hands of people who need it most.

"Edina is home to a lot of residents who are at risk because of their age. We have people to handle the labor right now," he said. "So, one night I put pen to paper and figured out what it would cost."

Four hours after sending the initial proposal for a hand sanitizer bottling and distribution project, Gerk got approval from the Edina Fire Chief and City Manager to move forward.

About 165 gallons of ethanol-based sanitizer was purchased. Gerk was able to order nearly 5,000 4-ounce bottles. Eight Public Works staff members were ready to help and spent about three days on the project.

"When I got the proposal, I thought 'this is a good idea, there's a possibility here,'" said Edina Fire Chief Tom Schmitz. "We knew it wouldn't be the answer to everything or that it would be enough to solve the problem, but it was a great opportunity and a step in the right direction."

By the end of April, the bottles of sanitizer were out in the community.

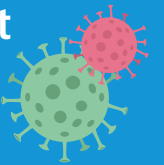
"It's been really impressive to see how quickly everyone stepped up and took on this exciting opportunity," said Schmitz, about the Clean Hands Across Edina project.

With certain supplies limited, Gerk doesn't know if there will be another round of distribution, but he's proud of what the team accomplished.

"I put myself in the shoes of people who are higher risk," said Gerk. "I'm lucky to have a spouse who can venture out for me, but some of our residents don't have that option. Anything we can do to help matters."

For more information, call the COVID-19 Hotline, 952-826-0370.

Stay Informed About the City's Response to COVID-19!



Edina COVID-19 Resource Hotline
952-826-0370



Resources for businesses, residents and seniors can be found at **BetterTogetherEdina.org**



EdinaMN.gov/coronavirus



Sign up for City Extra emails at **EdinaMN.gov/CityExtra**



Sign up for text notifications by texting EDINA to **57838**

Stay Healthy

Wash your hands with hot, soapy water for at least 20 seconds, cover your coughs and sneezes, practice social distancing and stay home if you are sick.

Stay Informed

To get reliable and updated information about COVID-19, refer to the Minnesota Department of Health, CDC or your health provider.

Challenge the Stigma

Sharing facts and accurate information about COVID-19 helps challenge rumors and stereotypes that have been negatively associated with racial and cultural groups or people wearing facemasks. There have been incidents of discrimination, bias and hate reported around the world during the pandemic.

If you believe you are a victim of a hate crime because of fear around COVID-19, contact the Edina Police Department, 952-826-1610.

If you feel you have experienced discrimination within the City's services, facilities or institution, contact Race & Equity Coordinator Heidi Lee, 952-826-1622.

Study: Edina Seniors Face Biggest Housing Cost Burdens

Providing More Senior Housing Options Could Help Workers, Families

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

It comes as no surprise that moving to Edina is economically out of reach for most people.

With no more developable land available, new houses come from teardowns of moderately priced homes. The average rebuild is listed at well over \$1 million. In addition, the majority of new multifamily housing is luxury apartments and villas.

Meanwhile, Edina's streets are busy in part because 92 percent of the workforce for 45,000 jobs commutes in from other parts of the Twin Cities. Their average annual wage of \$65,104 makes moving to Edina difficult.

This all comes from a housing study the City commissioned from Maxfield Research & Consulting. Perhaps the most interesting point

in the report is that Edina's seniors are in many ways the most squeezed in the housing crunch.

Edina's senior population is growing faster than any other age group. Some of that is new residents moving into high-end housing, but most is people aging in their homes. Their average income is around \$71,000, Maxfield President Mary Bujold told the Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) during a March presentation. Compare that to Edina's younger populations whose average household income is \$107,757.

About a third of Edina's senior homeowners spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Almost two-thirds of senior renters do the same, with many on fixed incomes and with higher medical and other expenses.

"The highest portion of [those who are] cost-burdened actually end up being those who are


older," Bujold told the HRA.

Helping them find solutions to remain in Edina yet move into homes more suited for them physically and financially could open the door to fixing some of the shortages.

"If we create more options for them, then their homes can become available for families and younger people," said Affordable Housing Development Manager Stephanie Hawkinson.

The full report will help City leaders as they evaluate housing proposals.

"Your continuing advice and wisdom will be invaluable to us," Mayor Jim Hovland told Bujold.

View the full report online at bit.ly/EdinaHousing. 

BY THE NUMBERS

New Deconstruction Grants Available for Edina Homeowners!

Homeowners and developers of residential properties can receive up to \$5,000 from Hennepin County to help offset the additional time and labor costs associated with deconstruction.

Learn more about the grants, including eligibility and requirements, at hennepin.us/deconstruction, or for more information, contact Residential Redevelopment Coordinator Addison Lewis at 952-833-9521 or ALewis@EdinaMN.gov.



Approximately 85 percent of the materials in a typical demolition or remodeling project in the United States could be salvaged and kept out of landfills.

30 Currently, only about 30 percent of building materials are reused or recycled.



Grants are available for demolition or renovation projects that are 250 square feet or larger on structures built prior to 1950.



In order to receive a grant, a minimum of 550 pounds of wood (including flooring, dimensional lumber, or ceiling/floor joists) must be deconstructed for reuse.

— COMPILED BY HEIDI LILLIE

Morningside Resident Thanks Everyday Heroes with Special Art

Proceeds from Sign Sales Benefit Organizations Serving the Hungry



Heather Lane's colorful chalk art at France Avenue and 42nd Street led to an outpouring of support for everyday community heroes and the creation of yard signs with the same sentiment. Photo by Scott Denfeld

BY DAVID KATZ

While a stay-at-home directive urges most Minnesotans to avoid public settings, everyday heroes are putting themselves at risk by attending to our most essential needs.

"I think of these people as working on the front lines ... against an enemy we can't see," explained Morningside Neighborhood resident Heather Lane. She, like so many millions of others across the country, is sheltering at home in an effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Staying home has afforded Lane opportunities for introspection. "The world felt really heavy. I found myself worrying about jobs, but also

worrying about going back to work once the worst is over. When will it seem safe? ... But it dawned on me: Wow, there are people going out there every day, because they have to in order to meet our everyday needs."

After adopting this gratitude-first approach for herself, Lane brainstormed ways to share the sentiment – no easy thing, in this age of social distancing. In late March, a strategy finally came to mind.

"We live near the busy intersection of France Avenue and 42nd Street ... with a retaining wall in front of our house," Lane explained. A graphic designer by training, she saw in the nondescript, weathered wood a useful canvas perfectly situated in a high-traffic location. "I went out there and began to sketch a kind of mural in children's chalk."

She had help – "tasteful art direction," as she puts it – from her 8-year-old son, Alex. "I wanted to write "Thank U" for all those in jobs on the front lines. I originally sketched it out in orange, but Alex convinced me that a rainbow would be better. He's right; it really pops!"

On the right of this simple message, Lane chalked a white cross against a red background – the universal symbol for the medical field. She supplemented this emblem, which measures just under four feet across, with five circles honoring additional professions.

"I truly hope that, as a society, we never forget the time that grocery store clerks and truck drivers stepped up like they're doing now. Along with doctors and nurses, I think they're part of a unique team working together to get us all through this." Police and fire departments each have a symbol as well, and for the same reason.

Lane had no particular expectations for this passion project, and certainly never envisioned the response that her simple message generated in just a few short weeks.

Word got out. Several area media outlets shared photos of Lane's chalking. Lane is most touched when she hears from her target audience, who drive down France Avenue on their way to work or make time for a short side trip on a rare day off.

Heartened by this outpouring of support, Lane decided to expand her efforts into a bona fide campaign. After floating ideas, she ordered 200 yard signs with the "Thank U" messaging. For every sign sold, \$10 is donated to organizations to help feed those facing food insecurity.

Initial stock sold out almost immediately, before Lane even got her order back from the printer.

After all, "we're all in this together ... and that's something we hopefully won't soon forget."

For more information, visit thethankustore.com.




FIRE CREWS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS WITH VISITS


In late March, Edina Fire crews drove by a 5-year-old's birthday celebration to brighten his big day. Crews drove by the homes of more than 40 birthday boys and girls while Gov. Tim Walz's Stay at Home order was in place in April. Photo by Kaylin Eidsness





City of Edina Goals

The City of Edina has four budget goals. Look for the goal icons throughout this publication to read stories about how the City is working to meet these goals.

 **Strong Foundation:** Maintain physical assets and infrastructure.

 **Reliable Service:** Maintain service levels that best meet the needs of the community.

 **Livable City:** Plan for connected and sustainable development.

 **Better Together:** Foster an inclusive and engaged community.



The REctivity Box is recreation delivered to your door.

Celebrate the start of summer and choose from four themed boxes to create something fun at home. You get to choose which box is right for you; this is not a subscription. Supplies are limited.

Please call the Parks & Recreation Department at 952-826-0367 with questions. Connect Card funds can be used toward the purchase of a REctivity Box.

**REctivity
Box**

Pick out your REctivity Box and order online at bit.ly/RegisterEdina.

CITY OF EDINA
4801 WEST 50TH STREET
EDINA, MN 55424

PRESORT STD
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TWIN CITIES MN
Permit No. 3932

ECRWSS
POSTAL PATRON
CAR-RT-WS

City Supports Residents, Businesses During Pandemic

Rental Assistance and Small Business Loan Program Offered as Part of COVID-19 Response

BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

The City of Edina is working to support residents and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rental Assistance

The Edina City Council in April voted to give Volunteers Enlisted to Assist People (VEAP) \$100,000 from the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund to provide limited emergency rent assistance to Edina residents to help maintain housing stability and prevent homelessness.

**Call VEAP for
rent assistance
952-888-9616**

VEAP typically provides one-time rent payments for those in need, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, VEAP will allow up to three

months of rental assistance. With rent for a two-bedroom unit priced at \$1,350, this money could help nearly 40 households get through this crisis.

The program helps residents increase their housing stability, but also helps landlords by ensuring rent is coming in.

Utility Bills

To offer assistance to homeowners and businesses, the City Council agreed to temporarily waive late fees for utility bills through June 10. The penalty for a late payment is typically 5 percent of the outstanding balance.

Since it is unclear how long COVID-19 will impact the community, the City will reassess the situation in early June and may consider waiving the late fees for a longer period of time.

Utility Bill Payments

- Pay by phone: 844-476-3107
- Online: EdinaMN.gov/utilitybilling
- Mail: City of Edina
PO Box 860586
Minneapolis, MN 55486-0586
- Drop off in box in Police Department lobby
- 5% Late fees waived through June 10

Small Business Emergency Assistance Loans

Also last month, the Housing & Redevelopment Authority approved a \$100,000 small business emergency assistance program to help local businesses that may not easily be awarded federal or state assistance.

Edina's Small Business Emergency Assistance Program will provide forgivable loans to businesses with fewer than 25 full-time equivalent employees and annual revenue of \$1 million or less. Eligible businesses can receive a loan to cover two months of operating expenses, up to \$10,000.

Loans will be forgiven for businesses that remain operational for two years, remain in Edina and retain at least three-quarters of their employees.

A committee of representatives from the City, Edina Chamber of Commerce, 50th & France Business & Professional Association and Open for Business will review applications May 1. An announcement will be made later that week and checks distributed in mid-May.

Budget Stabilization

To proactively address any potential 2020 budget shortfalls and to preserve future spending options in 2021 when increasing the City's tax levy may not be advisable or feasible, the City created a Budget Stabilization Fund.

General Fund surpluses from 2016, 2017 and 2019 and Construction Fund allocations for building maintenance, Edinborough Park plaza improvements and park signage were used to create the Budget Stabilization Fund, which totals nearly \$4.3 million.

City Manager Scott Neal is working with department directors to identify other ways to trim expenses or defer projects in order to bolster the Budget Stabilization Fund.

The Edina City Council will next meet 7 p.m. May 5 and 19. The Housing & Redevelopment Authority will meet 7:30 a.m. May 14. For more information, visit EdinaMN.gov.