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Stacie Callies
Executive Director

January 27, 2021

Dear Alderman Bauman and Members of the Public Works Committee:

I serve as Executive Director for the Westtown Association and send this letter regarding the proposed ordinance renaming Old World Third Street Doctor Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. The Old World Third Street Historic District, which is a national, state and locally designated historic district falls within our association boundaries on the western portion of Milwaukee's central business district.

We would like to offer our unequivocal support for the proposed ordinance. We view this as more than just changing the name of a street - Most importantly, we feel this change is a timely opportunity to honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who's message of unity and equality are more important than ever in our divided society. This change also provides an opportunity to more adequately connect the thriving North Martin Luther King Drive business district to Downtown's Third Street Historic District. Although the physical barrier of the Park East Freeway has been removed, a psychological barrier still exists at McKinley Boulevard that we believe still needs to change.

The area on Old World Third Street between Wisconsin and McKinley is home to about 40 small businesses, many of which are struggling to stay operational with the current pandemic which has eliminated live events and limited visitors to our City. The Old World Third Street Historic District is recognized as Milwaukee's premiere and nationally recognized entertainment district with nearly 15 bars and restaurants within a three-block area that entertain visitors and locals on a regular basis. Many of these small businesses have invested significant resources into branding their operation around their location on Old World Third Street - such as Third Street Market Hall at The Avenue, Third Street Tavern, Who's on Third and Brick 3 Pizza.

Old World Third Street is also a historically significant area that includes the last remaining intact portion of Milwaukee's original German commercial district with examples of various styles of Victorian commercial architecture going back to 1855. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 and on the State Register of Historic Places in 1989

So, to preserve this important piece of Milwaukee's history and to support this group of diverse business owners, we are asking for the City's partnership as the street name change is implemented. Alderwoman Coggs generously took the time to meet with the leaders of the Old World Third Street Association and Westtown this week after which time she recognized and amended the resolution to include language giving the Common Council and City Departments' commitment to work with residents/businesses owners in the Third Street area on a workable timeline to implement the name change as well as possibly deploying City resources to facilitate the transition process.

Today our request of the City is to begin the process to create an Honorary Street Name for Old World Third Street Historic District. We are also recommending and are willing to help spearhead the creation of an implementation working group that will include representatives from Old World Third St. Association, King Drive BID, Milwaukee Downtown BID #21, Visit Milwaukee, Department of City Development Commercial Corridor team, Common Council, Westtown and interested residents to develop an implementation plan to include co-branding the Old World Third Street Historic District with the new Dr. Martin Luther King Drive street name as well as incorporating an honorary street name for Old World Third Street. We ask that this working group be given the time to compile best practices, develop an implementation timeline acceptable to the business owners and common council and assess the resources and assets required to implement this change.

We look forward to finding out what resources the City can provide as we move through this process. Thank you again for allowing us to give input on this process.

Regards,

Stacie Callies