

bc: J. Purko
J. Polenske
T. Miller
File



Department of Public Works

Mariano A. Schifalacqua
Commissioner of Public Works

James P. Purko
Director of Operations

April 28, 2003


Mr. Daniel E. Kaemmerer
Community Services Specialist
2300 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.
P.O. Box 12436
Milwaukee, WI 53212

Dear Mr. Kaemmerer:

Please accept the enclosed application from the City of Milwaukee for a grant under the Stewardship Local Assistance Program. It should be noted that the Milwaukee Common Council has not yet authorized this application. We intend to introduce a resolution on May 13, 2003, which will provide the necessary authorization. The enclosed packet includes a draft of that resolution. Approval is expected at the Common Council's meeting on June 3, 2003. We will send you a copy of the approved resolution as soon as it is available.

Any questions about the application should be addressed to Tom Miller at 286-3304. You may also e-mail Mr. Miller at tmille@mpw.net.

Very truly yours,


Mariano A. Schifalacqua
Commissioner of Public Works

MAS:THM:cp

Enclosure

c: D. McCarthy, DCD
M. Wisniewski, DCD

GRANT APPLICATION
STEWARDSHIP LOCAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
URBAN RIVERS

PROJECT NARRATIVE

City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin
Project Name: Downtown Riverwalk Connection

Contact Person: Mariano Schifalacqua, Commissioner
Department of Public Works
City of Milwaukee
841 North Broadway, Room 516
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Project Location: See attached maps.

Project Description:

Summary

The City of Milwaukee is applying for a \$250,000 grant under the Stewardship Fund's Urban Rivers program. The grant would pay for 50% of the cost of a proposed **Riverwalk Connection** to link the Historic Third Ward's developing riverwalk to the already established downtown riverwalk system. This vital new connection would be constructed as part of an overall program of riverwalk enhancements which include (1) augmented plantings; (2) aesthetic upgrades to screen unsightly dockwalls and building facades, and (3) signing upgrades with an emphasis on handicap accessibility information, public way-finding, and environmental as well as historic documentation. The overall cost of these upgrades is expected to be around \$3,100,000. Of this total, \$500,000 will be allocated to the **Riverwalk Connection**. Assuming receipt of the requested \$250,000 grant, the remainder of the project funding would be provided by the City of Milwaukee and property owners in the immediate vicinity of the riverwalk.

Background

Over the last ten years the City of Milwaukee and private property owners near the Milwaukee River have invested nearly \$20,000,000 to develop a riverwalk system. The objectives of this project are to (1) provide public access to the river's edge, (2) promote public awareness of the historic and environmental significance of the city's namesake river, (3) encourage economic development along the waterfront, (4) provide a pedestrian route along the river from the Lake Michigan shoreline through the city, (5) enhance boating opportunities by increasing the number of publicly accessible boat slips, (6) promote tourism within the state of Wisconsin through the development of a major open

space attraction, and (7) encourage water quality improvements by augmenting public visibility and appreciation of the city's marine assets.

The riverwalk has been successful in achieving all of these objectives. That doesn't mean there isn't room for improvement. Just as with museums, shopping centers, amusement parks and other attractions, periodic upgrading of the riverwalk is necessary to maintain the public's attention and support. In addition, it is apparent that while the Milwaukee riverwalk is a wonderful facility, it isn't perfect. Several sections lack greenery and are somewhat stark. It isn't always obvious that the riverwalk affords a continuous public pathway. Access options for the disabled are not well marked. Some dock walls and abutting buildings are unattractive and detract from the riverwalk experience. And most importantly, a user-friendly, accessible connection between the Historic Third Ward riverwalk now under construction and the original downtown riverwalk does not exist. The **Riverwalk Connection** will provide this badly needed link.

The City and an organization of downtown property owners known as the Milwaukee Riverwalk District (MRD) have developed a plan to address all of the problems described above. The attached spreadsheet lists the various elements of the improvement plan and provides cost estimates for each. Through the efforts of MRD, property owners have formed a Business Improvement District as the formal vehicle for their involvement in the project.

The riverwalk improvement plan calls for approximately \$3,100,000 in upgrades. The **Riverwalk Connection** alone is expected to cost \$500,000. The City and Riverwalk District property owners would contribute toward the cost of these improvements. The City's share would be included in its year 2004 capitol budget. Private property owner contributions would be committed through the Business Improvement District's year 2004 operating plan. Both the 2004 City budget and the Business Improvement District operating plan for 2004 will be adopted in the fall of 2003.

Relation to Local and Regional Plan Objectives

The riverwalk system is a key component of the City's overall open space and recreation strategy. The Public Outdoor Recreation Plan for City of Milwaukee Neighborhoods, 2001-2005 adopted in January of 2002 states that "The riverwalk should be extended incrementally on both sides of the river from the harbor entrance to the North Avenue dam and should eventually link the Lakewalk to the Hank Aaron Trail" (page 40). The plan also recognizes that the population of downtown Milwaukee is growing due to the recent development of a large number of housing units in the area. This growing resident population increases the need for downtown recreation and open space facilities. One of the plan's goals is "To ensure that the city has adequate public outdoor recreational facilities for all of its citizens." This, of course, applies to the city's burgeoning downtown population as well as to residents of other city neighborhoods. In addition to all its other attributes, the riverwalk is a great open space amenity for downtown residents and helps meet the open space needs of that part of the city.

Riverwalk improvements are also consistent with regional land use plans. The attached letter from the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission confirms this. Among other things, the letter states that the regional land use plan "...encourages the provision of amenities such as urban waterfront facilities in dense urban areas....and has

long recommended the provision of facilities accommodating general river access and passive recreational pursuits in association with the Milwaukee and Menomonee River corridors”.

Finally, the City’s downtown riverwalk improvements have been coordinated with State plans for the area. The Henry Aaron State Park Trail Plan indicates that the trail would “...join the City of Milwaukee’s Riverlink system along the Milwaukee River in downtown Milwaukee” (page 6). In addition, plans for the proposed Lakeshore State Park show the park being linked to the City’s riverwalk system once the riverwalk is extended to the lakefront.

Key Partnerships

The Milwaukee Riverwalk system is the product of an ongoing public/private partnership. In 1994, downtown property owners in the vicinity of the river voluntarily formed a Business Improvement District for the purpose of assessing themselves for a portion of riverwalk improvement costs. So far, these property owners have committed over \$4.5 million to riverwalk development. Assuming receipt of the State grant, the board of the BID has indicated its willingness to fund approximately 22% of the local share of the riverwalk upgrade project. The City would fund the other 78% of the local share.

The City and the BID have worked hard to involve other segments of the community in the riverwalk initiative. For example, the Milwaukee Community Service Corps has been hired to operate a skimmer vessel that is used to collect floating debris from the river. Local grade school children were enlisted to design bronze medallions that have been installed in the sidewalk throughout the riverwalk system. MRD joins other downtown organizations in sponsoring various public events along the riverwalk. In addition, the State Department of Natural Resources has aided the riverwalk project in a variety of ways. Early in the project, the DNR adopted Riverwalk Development Standards which have been used to guide construction of the project. Half the cost of the river skimmer was funded through a DNR grant. And the DNR has installed an environmental education kiosk along the riverwalk. The City and MRD are committed to working with the DNR and other parties who have an interest and want to get involved in developing, maintaining, or programming Milwaukee’s riverwalk system.

Status of Acquisition Process

Wherever possible the riverwalk has been constructed upland of the river’s edge. However, in many cases pre-existing buildings were built right to dock wall lines. In those situations the riverwalk was constructed on piles out over the water. The adopted Development Standards generally allow riverwalk facilities up to 40 feet out into the water from the established dock line. In all cases, individual riverwalk segments, whether upland or over the water, belong to abutting property owners. The City is the abutting owner in a few instances. Where the City is not the abutting owner, perpetual public access easements have been acquired. Such an easement has been previously acquired for the block where the **Riverwalk Connection** would be constructed. However, some minor modifications to this easement may be required to reflect the new riverwalk segment.