

Milwaukee River Advocates Co-op

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An Open Letter to Milwaukee City Plan Commission from Milwaukee River Advocates Co-operative.

May 19, 2014

Greetings,

Regarding FN 140045, AMENDMENT #3, GENERAL PLAN PROJECT, DESCRIPTION AND OWNER'S STATEMENT OF INTENT; and FN 140046, DETAILED PLAN PROJECT, DESCRIPTION AND OWNER'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The mission of MRAC is to cultivate the natural habitat of the Milwaukee River, to provide educational and stewardship opportunities for members, and to engage people and organizations in the preservation and renewal of that habitat to restore it to pre-settlement conditions.

MRAC organizes, promotes and supports activities that move in the direction of restoration, and opposes activity and development that move in the opposite direction.

In the interests of the primary environmental corridor (PEC) of the Milwaukee River and its natural habitat, and of all Riverwest and city residents who enjoy the natural beauty of this wonderful resource, MRAC urges the Plan Commission to reject the requested changes and allowances of FN 140045 and FN 140046 unless the following changes are made.

1. There be no path accessing the West bank of the Milwaukee River. Paths always cut off passage of wildlife, and between Commerce and Capital on the West bank there are already 12 points of access from the parks, streets and bluff. In this immediate area there are the dorm path, the Rivercrest I staircase, and the pedestrian bridge path. Any convenience gained by adding an additional path is far outweighed by the environmental damage it will cause.
2. That there be no paved or gravel paths anywhere below the bluff line.
3. That native plants be used in all areas where the owner plans to do planting. The current plan calls for "native and natural" plants, and that language could allow for non-native species since all plants are "natural."
4. That all signage without exception conform to the standards of the General Plan Development, meaning that no signage be visible from the East or West river bank as specified by the View Shed defined by the Milwaukee River Overlay District. An exception is an unacceptable precedent which would lead to more signage to blemish our experience of the beauty of the Milwaukee River and its foot trails.

5 of 6

5. That the footprint of all building construction be moved back to fifty feet or more from the bluff line, as is specified for all construction on the North side of North Avenue. The same environmental protection reasoning that protects the North side of North Avenue applies to the same corridor immediately to the South of North Avenue. The current plan is 8 feet (or 10 feet 9 inches, it varies depending on which document or drawing is being used) at its closest to 21 feet at its furthest, always way below even 50% of the same requirement less than 100 yards to the North.

6. That MRAC be allowed to write "rules of etiquette" on how to enjoy the river and its footpaths with respect and without violating the corridor's carrying capacity, including such courtesies as staying on existing paths, and respecting no biking regulations on county owned areas. And that Adventure Rock and Mandel Group allow MRAC to conduct quarterly workshops on proper ways to appreciate and enjoy the River without exceeding its carrying capacity. That lease and membership contracts require tenants and members to attend this workshop and abide by these rules.

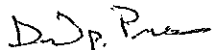
In addition, MRAC requests answers to several questions.

1. The plan calls for a swap of the park or green space, and contends that the new green space will be at least as large as the current green space, or 25,430 square feet. The drawings show that possibly some portion of the new proposed park is actually on the bluff slope, which should not be accessible to public traffic. What is the square footage of the new green space actually accessible to walking residents, not counting any portion of the green space that falls on the slope to the River?

2. The Mandel assay determined that beneath 3 inches of topsoil, the bluff is a landfill consisting of, in addition to natural decaying plants, construction debris left over from prior Humboldt Yards construction and other pollutants. The Jewel Osco construction promised this would not happen. What does Mandel Group propose to guarantee that their new construction will not further contribute to this pollution, and what steps are being taken to ensure that laying the foundation will not release hazardous dust into the air and leave contaminated silt and construction by-product on the ground to run off into the river (as happened with the dorms)?

3. Would the Commission and Mandel Group please verify whether or not there is any public funding, including tax deferments, for this project?

Regards,



David P. Press
for Milwaukee River Advocates Co-operative
Sincerely,