

INTERFAITH CONFERENCE

OF GREATER MILWAUKEE

Founded 1970

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American Baptist Churches of Wis.
The Rev. Dr. Arlo Reichter,
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Episcopal Church
The Milwaukee Diocese
The Rt. Rev. Steven Miller, Bishop

Ev. Lutheran Church in America
Greater Milwaukee Synod
The Rev. Paul Stumm-Diers, Bishop

Islamic Society of Milwaukee
Othman Atta, President

Milwaukee Jewish Council for
Community Relations &
Milwaukee Jewish Federation
Paula Simon, Executive Director

Presbyterian Church (USA)
Presbytery of Milwaukee

Religious Society of Friends
The Milwaukee Meeting
George Owen, Clerk

Roman Catholic Church
The Milwaukee Archdiocese
The Most Rev. Timothy M. Dolan,
Archbishop

Unitarian Universalist Churches
The S.E. Wisconsin Association
Janet Nortrom, Representative

United Church of Christ
The S.E. Wisconsin Association
The Rev. Dr. Tom O. Bentz,
Association Minister

United Methodist Church
Metro North District
The Rev. Dr. Velma Smith,
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The Rev. Dan Schwerin,
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Statement in Support of Community Benefits Agreement for Park East area redevelopment

Marcus White, Executive Director
June 10, 2004

The Interfaith Conference is the vehicle through which twelve religious judicatories collaborate in addressing social concerns. Our members include Protestant and Catholic denominations as well as the Jewish community and the Islamic Society of Milwaukee. In the greater Milwaukee area these twelve denominations have approximately 600 congregations. The Conference is a member of the Good Jobs and Livable Neighborhoods Coalition.

We strongly support the Community Benefits Agreement proposed for the redevelopment of the Park East area. This significant development provides a very rare opportunity for our city to create good jobs and opportunity for city residents, especially those in more disadvantaged areas. As a city, we have an opportunity to insure that all of Milwaukee is included in the vision for this land. Everyday in the faith community we see and serve people who are in need. Seniors, young families, displaced workers, people who are laid-off, unemployed and underemployed.

We appreciate that vibrant, exciting development that adds to the tax base is important. Good, just development does not exclude the possibility of a healthy tax base. Given the prior use of this land, any new value will be a win for the city.

More importantly, good, just development is exactly that – good and just. A lot of exciting things have been happening in downtown Milwaukee in recent years and DCD and the Common Council are to be commended for that. But much, maybe all, of the housing development is out of reach for the vast majority of Milwaukee residents. That is why we encourage you to approve the strong recommendation language that has been proposed. Milwaukee certainly needs an economically diverse population that includes wealth, but downtown Milwaukee and surrounding areas such as Brewers Hill are becoming islands for the wealthy. The Park East area needs to be a neighborhood that is inclusive. Years ago, an entire community was displaced from the neighborhood in the name of “urban renewal”. This second phase of “renewal” should not, once again, slight the African-American community. Our city and region need places and spaces that serve to bridge our gaps, not add to the message that ‘this is not for you’. This is a chance to say that exciting things happening downtown are for everyone. Local jobs for local people, new opportunity for those often discriminated against, good wages, and inclusive housing should always be our starting point as city leaders, not what we settle for. We urge you to support this proposal.

“To uphold the dignity of every person and the solidarity of the human community”