



Department of City Development

Housing Authority
Redevelopment Authority
City Plan Commission
Historic Preservation Commission

September 30, 2004

To The Honorable Members of the
Community & Economic Development Committee
City of Milwaukee
City Hall, Room 205

Dear Committee Members:

Subject: Main Street Milwaukee Program (File #031155)

Chairman Davis has scheduled File #031155 for discussion at the meeting of the Community & Economic Development Committee on Tuesday, October 5. This file, if adopted, will authorize the Department of City Development to enter into an agreement with the Milwaukee office of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) to establish the Main Street Milwaukee program. The file contains a great deal of information describing the proposed program. I am writing to share a few highlights of the program design, and to describe more fully the legislative process that is necessary for its implementation.

Main Street Milwaukee program design

Main Street Milwaukee is a carefully crafted strategy that will support the revitalization of four neighborhood commercial districts during the next six years. The approach, based on the Main Street model developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and implemented with great success in cities across the United States, will supplement existing commercial revitalization tools now overseen by the DCD. These existing tools, including Business Improvement Districts, façade grants, retail investment fund grants, and ongoing recruitment efforts by DCD staff, will continue to be available in Milwaukee's many commercial districts.

Accountability is one of the strongest features of the Main Street Milwaukee program. Participating districts are required to measure and report the impact of public and private investment in their commercial areas, using data such as numbers of businesses and jobs created, numbers of citizens engaged in grass roots development, and so on. In an era when public funds are scarce, the program recognizes the importance of expecting and documenting performance.

The partnership with LISC in the planning and implementation of Main Street Milwaukee is another strength of the program. The collaboration means that the City funds allocated to Main Street will be supplemented by significant funds raised privately by LISC. The partnership also means that the experience LISC has gained in successful neighborhood

revitalization efforts here in Milwaukee and elsewhere around the nation will inform the evolution and refinement of the Milwaukee Main Street program. The engagement of the Milwaukee LISC office adds an exciting new twist to the traditional Main Street model, and we are very enthused about it.

Because the program is a partnership between the City and LISC, we are proposing that it be overseen by a Partners Board whose members are appointed by both parties. City officials will appoint five representatives, and four appointed by the Milwaukee office of LISC. All members will either live in the city of Milwaukee, or own or operate businesses in the city of Milwaukee.

In the course of discussion about the Main Street Milwaukee program, we have received many questions concerning the selection of the four districts that will participate. These districts have not yet been identified; they will be selected through a competitive process. Once the Council adopts File #031155, we will schedule workshops to acquaint local non-profit organizations with the application process. The Main Street Milwaukee Partners Board will make the final selection of the participating districts.

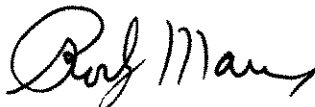
Process for adoption and implementation

File #031155 is a resolution that does essentially two things. First, it authorizes the DCD Commissioner to enter into a cooperation agreement with LISC to implement the Main Street Milwaukee program. A copy of the draft cooperation agreement is included in the file for this resolution. Second, the resolution expresses the City of Milwaukee's intention to use Community Development Block Grant funds to support the program during the next six years, provided that funds are available and that adequate private sector support is forthcoming.

The cooperation agreement calls for the creation of the Main Street Milwaukee Partners Board earlier. An ordinance creating the Partners Board will be introduced at the Common Council meeting on October 11, 2004. Action on this ordinance will be required before the four Main Street districts can be selected.

DCD staff will be present at the CED meeting on October 5; we look forward to the opportunity to respond to questions about the Main Street Milwaukee program and the process by which it will be implemented. If you'd like a personal briefing, please call Deputy Commissioner Martha Brown at Ext. 5810.

Sincerely,



Rocky Marcoux
Acting Commissioner

C: Common Council members

RM:MLB:tb