

BYO Studio
2246 S Kinnickinnic Ave
Milwaukee, WI 53207

May 7, 2012

City of Milwaukee
Alderman Zielinski
Board members Bid #44

Re: Sidewalk bumpout on 2200 block of Kinnickinnic Ave

This is a time of great progress in Bay View. Again voted as Milwaukee's best neighborhood, Bay View is experiencing a renaissance. Cafes, restaurants, art galleries, cocktail lounges, retail, salons and service businesses are flocking to Bay View, seeking to get a toehold in an up-and-coming neighborhood. Our organization is proud to be a part of this great community and we are especially excited by the many positive developments underway at, and around, the north end of the KK corridor.

As owner/operators of minority-owned BYO Studio, we have worked tirelessly for 3 years to develop our location into a clean, inviting, sophisticated and culturally diverse venue. We were proud runners-up for the last 2 years as the best Gallery in Milwaukee (having lost top honors only to the esteemed Milwaukee Art Museum) in the Shepherd Express's Best of Milwaukee awards. We have donated our space, staff and promotional budget to numerous fundraisers for local non-profits, including, for example, our neighbors at the Boulevard Theater, Latinas en Accion and the Catalyst Foundation (an organization dedicated to saving kids from human trafficking). As part of our efforts to be a hub for creatives, not just in the fine arts, we have hosted and sponsored local dance schools, outreach organizations for inner-city youth, and arranged complimentary workshops for at-risk children and Bay View High School students.

We have introduced Bay View to hundreds of new people over the past 3 years. Those people have, in turn, gone on to frequent many of the surrounding salons, restaurants, cafes and stores, bringing more revenue to all of our neighbors.

We have committed ourselves to community involvement and have advocated strongly for initiatives throughout the Bay View business corridor. We strive to be a part of our community through civic and professional engagement. As owner/operators we have directly engaged each of our neighbors and given them our personal cell phone numbers so that they could let us know if there is *ever* a problem or concern with our business or patrons. We have set a high bar in terms of the quality of exhibits we are willing to host, the music and entertainment we support, and the products we serve. We are diligent in controlling the amount of alcohol served in every drink, requiring bartenders to use measured jiggers for every one of our cocktails. We investigate any issue brought to our attention promptly, and have a policy of following up with neighbors should they express concerns. We have a written policy requiring staff to sweep up all debris in front of our building every night, including the street 18" out into the gutter as well as the first 10' of sidewalk space in front of our neighbors (including doorways). Any problems are reported to management promptly and addressed immediately.

Our work within the community has not been limited to our gallery, however. As investors in multiple

residential and commercial properties throughout Bay View, we have maintained hands-on involvement on every project in our portfolio. With a mere \$3,500 scraped together to invest in our first home, we were forced out of necessity to learn everything possible about construction, remodeling and historic restoration. As members of the Bay View community for over 13 years, we have been directly involved with over \$1.8 million dollars in investment activity in Bay View alone. We have done everything from swinging hammers to building storefronts to hand-painting 40' facades. Despite the warnings of many, not familiar with Bay View and its potential, we took a huge risk in 2006 and completely rebuilt and restored the two decrepit and crumbling buildings now home to BYO Studio and Jimmy Johns.

We couldn't be prouder of our efforts and the results.

While Bay View has many great attributes, the commercial corridor is lacking in several areas including aesthetics, pedestrian friendly amenities, landscaping, and community gathering spaces. Specific to the north end where we are located, we regularly observe cars careening through the intersection of KK/Lincoln/Howell day and night. The confusing nature of this intersection, erratic and brief walk signals, multiple turn signals and wide crosswalks present a host of potential catastrophes waiting to happen. The welcome addition of Alterra's vast outdoor seating area and the expanded sidewalks on the west side of KK (in front of Cafe Lulu) has created a lopsided intersection with no resolution to the plight of the numerous businesses on the east side of the street. This side, already cursed with no parking from Stone Creek to Jimmy Johns (6 businesses) is currently stuck with little opportunity to engage pedestrians or offer seating, thereby limiting our potential in a time of great possibilities. Some of these land-locked business are especially affected in the summer time when Milwaukee becomes a city heavily inclined toward outdoor dining and cafes.

We strongly support the current proposal put forth and supported by the majority of affected businesses to expand the sidewalk area 4-6' out into the street where there is currently no parking allowed. As initially proposed, this sidewalk bumpout will not take away any parking and will benefit area businesses in the following ways:

- Increased revenues (and tax base) during the summer months. These businesses *lose revenue* every year in the summer due to Milwaukee's insatiable appetite for outdoor entertainment options and the dearth in Bay View;
- Create additional employment in Bay View by increasing the opportunities for these businesses to serve more people during the normally slow summer months;
- The addition of trees (if planted) would help to shield buildings from the intense western sunlight. This would reduce heat levels in the late spring, summer and early autumn months, thereby *decreasing* the energy needed to cool these buildings;
- Improve pedestrian safety by reducing the crosswalk distance from east to west (where Howell dead-ends into KK). The light at this crosswalk is intermittent at best, and is ridiculously brief. Pedestrians often dart across the street due to the brief and unpredictable walk light. The traffic flows are confusing due to the many stop and turn signals on KK and Howell from multiple directions;
- The addition of foliage in the expanded sidewalk area would help to soften the streetscape currently composed entirely of masonry buildings;
- Slow traffic slightly as it enters Bay View. This serves multiple purposes, including making drivers aware that they are entering a District (as the north end of BV has become) and allowing drivers the opportunity to absorb the many exciting things happening at the

- intersection (Art Stop, local businesses and their new patio areas, landscaping, etc);
- Define a sense of "place" for pedestrians where they can walk, shop, drink and dine. This would improve all of Bay View's image as a **destination** with many more options for people to engage the neighborhood on foot. Although it is common in many cities, pedestrian friendly intersections are very limited in Milwaukee.

This project will help the overwhelming majority of the businesses at this intersection to increase their revenues and customer base. The increase in pedestrians, spending time and money at this intersection, will also increase awareness of **all** of the businesses located at this intersection. For residents of Bay View, it will provide a gathering space and build awareness of the entertainment and service options right in their own backyard. The pedestrian friendly nature of this intersection will encourage engagement within the district, as people walk, run and bike to this convenient and vibrant intersection.

We ask that you support the sidewalk bump out and the small businesses which have invested many hundreds of thousands of dollars and years of effort in promoting Bay View and developing their businesses to serve the growing and changing needs of the Bay View community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ken Yandell
BYO Studio