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#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ken Leinbach



December 9, 2011

City of Milwaukee Public Works Committee  
Ald. Robert Bauman, Chair  
200 East Wells Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Committee members,

On behalf of the Urban Ecology Center (UEC), I am writing to let you know what the Airline Yards redevelopment project means to the Center and the kids and families we will serve when we open our doors in the fall, and to ask for your support of this important project.

The Urban Ecology Center is a neighborhood-based, environmental education, nonprofit community center. Our “outdoor laboratories” are located in two urban parks in Milwaukee. The Valley branch will be our third, and the Airline Yards site will be our “outdoor laboratory” here. If you have not yet been to one of our Centers, on any given day you’ll find classes of students from local schools engaging in hands-on learning about science, nature and how to live more sustainably; community members using the array of resources we offer; adventure-seekers borrowing our outdoor recreational equipment; or people just visiting the Center, which is available to everyone for fun and learning nearly every day of the year. In the Riverside Park and Washington Park neighborhoods where our Centers are, we have watched crime levels drop dramatically once we arrived, because the more positive activity there is in a park, the less criminal activity there will be.

For the past several years, the Center has been working closely with Menomonee Valley Partners (MVP) on a project we call *Menomonee Valley – From the Ground Up*, which includes opening a branch of the Center to serve the Menomonee Valley and nearby residents; transforming a brownfield into a 24-acre ecologically diverse park and outdoor science classroom; and constructing new segments of the Hank Aaron State Trail as commuting and recreational amenities. To date, MVP and UEC have raised \$6 million to fund the construction of our branch and the outdoor classroom at Airline Yards.

The Center moved forward with our renovation of the building at 3700 W. Pierce Street because of the depth of the partnerships involved in transforming this area. The partnership between the City, State, MVP and UEC in the design and construction to date has been incredible. The public and private sector financial

#### URBAN ECOLOGY CENTER

Riverside Park • 1500 E. Park Place • Milwaukee, WI 53211 • Phone: (414) 964-8505 • Fax: (414) 964-1084 • [www.urbanecologycenter.org](http://www.urbanecologycenter.org)  
Washington Park • 4145 W. Lisbon Ave. • Milwaukee, WI 53208 • Phone: (414) 344-5460 • Fax: (414) 344-5462

support and community excitement about the improvements underway has been truly phenomenal. Yet our success is fully dependent upon the success of the Airline Yards project and the timing of its creation, since the outdoor classroom is the basis for our teaching and community programming.

Because of the unique level of partnerships involved, and the reputations of the Urban Ecology Center and the Menomonee Valley Partners, this project is being watched by community leaders nationally. What we are doing in Milwaukee is serving as a model for other communities. "Collective impact" is what everyone is watching for these days, and together, we are engaged in a textbook collective impact success story. The Urban Ecology Center is a committed partner in this collective impact project.

I ask for your support in moving the story along so that we may start construction on Airline Yards this spring, and open our doors, and the potential for this site, next year.

Sincerely,



Ken Leinbach  
Executive Director