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**Testimony of Heather Heaviland  
Director of Real Estate Services, IFF**

**Before the Zoning, Neighborhoods, and Development Committee  
Regarding Proposed Changes to IM Zoning and Allowed Uses  
October 9, 2012**

Thank you, Chair Bohl, Vice-Chair Wade and members of the Zoning, Neighborhoods, and Development Committee for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to the proposed changes to the IM zoning classification, which would change the use classification for elementary and secondary schools from an allowed to a special use.

My name is Heather Heaviland, and I am the Real Estate Services Director for IFF, a nonprofit lender and real estate consultant that is located in Milwaukee and serves all of Wisconsin, as well as four other Midwestern states. IFF provides nonprofit corporations in low-income communities with the affordable, flexible capital they need to own, improve or build their facilities. We also help them plan and manage these capital projects.

IFF's work includes the financing and development of community health clinics, early childhood facilities, and affordable housing, for example, but it is schools that serve low-income communities that have constituted the largest part of our work in recent years. In fact, since 1988, the year we were founded, IFF has:

- Made loans or packaged financing totaling \$215 million to schools to support everything from start-up, equipment, acquisition, renovation, new construction, and predevelopment of both owned and leased space;
- Conducted research in Milwaukee and other municipalities in order to identify areas of greatest need for school development;
- Consulted on more than 85 different campus projects, and provided individual technical assistance and training to hundreds of school applicants and operators; and
- Created 20,750 new student slots and 2.5 million square feet of constructed or renovated space in schools.

IFF opposes the proposed changes to IM Zoning. We oppose these changes because:

- (1) It will adversely affect the development of schools, in particular on the south side of Milwaukee, where real estate options are significantly limited and the population of school-aged students is growing;
- (2) Schools that pursue innovative models in order to overcome the achievement gap and require a diversity of real estate options will be disproportionately affected.

As IFF's Director of Real Estate Services in Wisconsin, a major emphasis of my work is to help schools of all types, whether public or private, to overcome the obstacles associated

with securing appropriate space, and to stay focused on their primary mission – educating children. In the past three years alone, I have helped nearly 20 Milwaukee schools that are producing great results and looking to grow, to navigate this search for space.

Finding a suitable facility is always a challenge as we seek to identify options that are accessible to the target population, large enough to accommodate a school, and can be retrofitted to provide a quality environment that fully complies with Code requirements for school occupancy within a reasonable budget. Neighborhoods on Milwaukee's south side are particularly dense and offer few suitable options.

IM facilities have been one successful solution. MC2 and Escuela Verde are both non-traditional schools that target the thousands of Milwaukee high schoolers at risk for dropping out every year. Both successfully located in IM facilities that offered the flexible space they needed for their unique program models and are now neighborhood assets. MC2 offers a blended virtual school that offers each student flexibility to work off-site as they demonstrate the self responsibility that level of freedom requires. Escuela Verde uses projects to engage students in the material they are learning and keep them motivated to learn. Without the flexibility of the IM District, these schools may not exist today and the students they serve may not be in school today.

I have personally toured a number of buildings that are zoned IM. Many of these are vacant and have struggled to find suitable users. Some are also good candidates for potential school use. Conversion for use as schools fits with the spirit of the IM zoning designation and would potentially offer these neighborhoods a stable anchor in lieu of the potential blight and decline caused by vacant buildings and in particular vacant buildings of the size of many IM buildings.

In 2010, IFF released a study – *Choosing Performance* – that analyzed the performance, location, and enrollment at MPS, charter schools and private schools participating in MPCP. Our study found that only a third of Milwaukee's school-age children had access to a school – of any type – that was confirmed to be at or near Wisconsin state standards for academic performance. It also estimated that up to 79,000 more seats in performing schools were needed to serve all children, and that two-thirds of that need was concentrated in just eight Milwaukee zip codes, including two on the south side of Milwaukee. Other studies have identified that as few as 42% of Milwaukee students who enter the 9<sup>th</sup> grade will go on to graduate.

Without the flexibility to locate schools in the neighborhoods that need them the most and to offer students the diversity of school models that is Milwaukee's hallmark, we will significantly limit the opportunities available to Milwaukee's youth.

Thank you.