

May 4, 2010

To the Honorable Common Council
Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee
City of Milwaukee

Dear Committee Members:

File Nos. 081568 and 081569 establish an overlay zone and create design guidelines for a Site Plan Review Overlay Zone, known as the Milwaukee River Greenway Site Plan Overlay Zone, in the 1st, 3rd and 6th Aldermanic Districts.

File 081568 establishes an overlay zone that protects the environmental corridor and adds design standards for future commercial and multi-family residential development in the Milwaukee River Greenway Corridor. This overlay zone will serve to protect the banks, floodplain, primary environmental corridor, natural beauty, greenway and bluffs, as well as promote high quality, sustainable development along the upper reaches of the Milwaukee River. The overlay district includes properties adjacent to, and extending 50 feet from the Primary Environmental Corridor (PEC), as mapped by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. These properties will also be affected by tree protection and storm water management regulations, which will be considered by the Public Works Committee on May 12, 2010.

File 081569 creates design standards to promote the use of high quality building materials and sustainable design to protect and enhance the Milwaukee River Greenway corridor. These standards prohibit principal buildings to be constructed within the PEC and provide additional building setback, building height, landscaping and building material requirements for new development.

All existing principal and accessory structures, as well as new single-family dwellings and duplexes, are exempt from the MRGSPROZ design standards. Parcels south of North Avenue on the east bank of the river are exempt because this area serves as a transition zone from the downtown Riverwalk to the more naturalized area. The design standards shall apply over and above the standards of the underlying zoning districts. The design standards regulate the following areas: building placement and exceptions, building height (along commercial corridors and otherwise), building design including glazing and building material requirements, signage, landscape screening for principal buildings, and parking.

The Northeast Side Plan identifies the Milwaukee River Greenway as an opportunity to preserve a unique and irreplaceable ecological environment; enhance the existing network of open space; strengthen green infrastructure, i.e., the interconnected system of parks, trails, wetlands, woodlands, rivers and environmental corridors; and provide recreation opportunities to City residents. The Plan also notes the direct economic benefit of river corridor improvements to property values in the surrounding area, as well as the amenity benefit to residents of the City and metro area.

On May 3, 2010, a public hearing was held and at that time, over twenty people were in support of the file, and approximately three people were opposed. Since the proposed establishment of the MRGSPROZ and design standards is consistent with the recommendations of the Northeast Side Comprehensive Area Plan, the City Plan Commission at its regular meeting on May 3, 2010 recommended approval of the subject files.

Sincerely,

Rocky Marcoux
Executive Secretary
City Plan Commission of Milwaukee

cc: Ald. Nik Kovac
Ald. Ashanti Hamilton
Ald. Milele Coggs