

Press Conference Remarks / Testimony 6/13/23

Chairman Murphy and Members of the Zoning Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony.

My name is Linda Frank. I am a member of the Climate & Economic Equity Task Force and of the advocacy group Our Future MKE, created to achieve the adoption and full implementation of the Plan.

To provide the context for climate and equity action, I will refer you to the wisdom of the Indigenous Women of the Americas. Their 2015 treaty<sup>1</sup> describes the harms caused by human GHG emissions. The treaty states that the natural laws of Mother Earth and Father Sky have been violated such that the sacred system of life cannot continue safely in the way it has existed for millions of years. The treaty calls for people, and specifically women, to rise up and work to influence government leaders to bring human-made laws into conformity with natural laws. That is what we are all here to do and it is why Milwaukee needs the Climate & Equity Plan. And, while the treaty of the Indigenous Women called out the historical and ongoing violence committed against Indigenous Women, the MKE Plan calls out the historical and ongoing injustices committed against people of color and demands that environmental justice guide every policy, program and opportunity created under the Plan.

I want to call particular attention to the Plan recommendations focused on protection and restoration of Nature in the City.

We live in a major urban area where we need a concentrated number of buildings, roads, and parking lots. But the MKE Climate & Equity Plan recognizes that natural laws must be respected even in cities. This landscape of buildings, roads and parking lots causes flooding, water contamination and extreme heat, especially during the heavy storms and heat waves of climate change. These conditions are particularly dangerous for people living in MKE's underserved neighborhoods who may lack the resources for adapting to these dangers.

The good news is that Milwaukee can address these urban challenges through the 4-pronged approach of Nature in the City. Those prongs build on existing City programs and capacities. They are –

- 1) Place conservation protections over some 25 remaining natural gems that have been identified in the County, 4 of them in the City of Milwaukee
- 2) Expand the successful Green & Healthy Schools program that removes asphalt and installs natural outdoor play areas for school kids
- 3) Keep trees healthy on our streets and in public areas and plant more trees in our neighborhoods, and
- 4) Incentivize removal of excess commercial parking lot space and replace it with trees and vegetation.

For Nature in the City and all of the other excellent proposals put forward, I ask you to adopt MKE's Climate & Equity Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> The treaty was signed by Traditional Headwomen representing Indigenous Women of the North and South