

# CHARTER OF THE MILWAUKEE PROMISE

Enabling Legislation: CCFN 100884

## VISION AND ASSUMPTIONS

Milwaukee is a great city. Its residents are among the hardest-working, conscientious, and dedicated anywhere and these attributes know no distinction of race, sex, or class. Milwaukeeans have always committed their time, effort and treasure to creating not only the physical manifestations of civic life, but improving the non-material aspects of life as well. Clean streets, safe neighborhoods, flourishing businesses, and good government are all things Milwaukee residents want not only for themselves, but for their children.

Unfortunately, the reality for many in this city is that all their efforts, all their struggles, have not brought the just fruit of their labors. Recent reports identifying Milwaukee as having the fourth-highest poverty rate in the nation only underscore what many who live here already know: theirs is a dream deferred. And as surely as government has an obligation to build roads, clean streets, plow snow, and fight fires, it also has an obligation to do what it can to clear obstacles to achievement and open doors to success for its residents.

While the challenges confronted by Milwaukee residents are as varied as the people themselves, the Milwaukee Promise classifies these challenges into three broad categories: Poverty, Disparity, and Inequality. Hereafter referred to as PDI, the Promise acknowledges that any system of this type is imperfect, however, it captures a broad range of those challenges that ought to be a primary focus of the efforts of this government.

Perhaps the most painful irony is that the City of Milwaukee already spends a great deal of money attempting to remediate the effects of PDI. In fact, one of the underlying assumptions of the Milwaukee Promise is that it is not solely a lack of resources that prevents the remediation of these challenges. It is, instead, that these resources are often misallocated or not used in ways that provide the greatest benefit to the greatest number.

Another important assumption that underlies the Milwaukee Promise is that certain municipal services are delivered without consideration of their effect on PDI. Police officers are sworn to protect all citizens. Firefighters do not check income levels before they put out a fire. On the other hand, the City has already made policy decisions that were expected to make a difference in PDI and whether they have or have not should be evaluated. As just one example, when the "MORE" ordinance was adopted in early 2010, the expectation was that a larger percentage of public works' projects would be directed to local businesses – particularly those that employ minorities and others categorized as "at a disadvantage".

The Milwaukee Promise also assumes that it is the workers of this City – from the front-line to the top – who are best able to determine how to measure their work fairly. There is no presumption here that these employees are some sort of bureaucratic stereotype uninterested in the condition of their fellow citizens. To the contrary, the Milwaukee Promise calls on all of them to participate actively in making this program work – both in its planning and execution. There is a real belief underlying this initiative that municipal employees want to see their efforts amount to something more than a paycheck and a pension.

What must be absolutely clear is that, in its inaugural year, the Milwaukee Promise does not add one cent to the annual budget. Further, it makes no changes to the allocation of funds in the budget. Instead, it identifies those resources in the budget that will be subjected to a heightened level of scrutiny throughout 2011 to determine how well they are being used. The information derived will be used to better inform the Mayor and the Common Council as they work together to confront PDI in the 2012 budget.

## YEAR ONE PLAN AND CALENDAR

November 5, 2010: The Milwaukee Common Council will adopt the 2011 budget. Throughout it, staff will have identified no less than \$75 million in expenditures as subject to the terms of the Milwaukee Promise. In some cases, the lines will be “whole”. In others, a portion of those lines will be identified. In either case, staff will be prepared to explain why those purposes and amounts were identified as being part of the resources the City commits annually to confronting PDI.

November – December, 2010: The staff of the Legislative Reference Bureau will contact departments with funds identified as subject to the terms of the Milwaukee Promise. These departments will be asked if they believe their funds are correctly identified. If they do not, staff will have some latitude to refine departmental participation. Significant variances must be reported to the Finance and Personnel Committee. Once issues of identification are resolved, each department will be asked to submit metrics by which its progress in addressing PDI can be fairly measured. Again, staff will have some ability to negotiate these metrics, but the final decision over whether particular measures are acceptable or not will rest with the Common Council and the Mayor following review by the Finance and Personnel Committee. The initial report of the Milwaukee Promise program finalizing both amounts and metrics will be due to the Common Council no later than December 31, 2010

January-August 2011: Two quarterly reports on departmental achievement in meeting measures agreed on will be gathered by the staff of the Legislative Reference Bureau. They will be submitted to the Common Council and reviewed by the Community and Economic Development Committee. Individual public hearings on their contents may or may not be scheduled, in the discretion of the Committee. A third quarterly report, including estimates of results for the month of September, will be prepared and submitted to the Common Council on or before Labor Day 2011. This report will be distributed to all Council members and is intended to assist them as they evaluate various departments during budget deliberations.