



March 19, 2019

Alderman Rainey
Chairman, Committee on Zoning and Neighborhood Development
Milwaukee Common Council
200 E Wells
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Chairman Rainey,

There is no question that Milwaukee's commercial real estate landscape is more prosperous now than it has been in decades. Our City has received national recognition for new construction of the Northwestern Mutual headquarters, BMO Office Tower, Hammes Building, Bucks Arena project, harbor district redevelopment and more. These marquee projects serve as a catalyst to the hundreds and thousands of apartment and condominium units being proposed and developed by investors. This momentum is possible because of Milwaukee's reputation as a reasonable community to do work in terms of the planning and approval process for projects.

The current system has proven successful – time and time again. Whether in one of the City's 'overlay zones' or historic neighborhoods, commercial real estate owners and investors understand the process and adhere to the guidelines put forth by the City. The overlay zone design process has specific code requirements that preserve and enhance the zones' unique attributes. These code requirements are well-understood by those doing work in the areas, and more importantly, by those looking to do work in the area. At this time, review by Milwaukee Planning Commission has sufficiently moved many projects through approval within these zones adhering to guidelines put forth by Common Council.

Often complex financing for projects, particularly in overlay zones can create compressed timeframes for moving a project through the plan and approval process. By adding additional approval requirements, as requested with the introduction of substitute ordinance 181429 B, the process will be slowed and put in possible jeopardy. Members of the commercial real estate community oppose any ordinance or recommendation to change a plan approval process prior to consultation.

The continuance of a robust commercial real estate market within the City of Milwaukee depends upon creating, and in this case maintaining, a high degree of confidence that there is certainty in investment. We believe that the introduction of additional approval requirements in some of Milwaukee's most sought-after areas will create a great degree of uncertainty and slow commercial real estate investment in the City.

The commercial real estate community will support other efforts to strengthen building code, compliance and understanding of those rules, but strongly oppose additional oversight that will delay progress. We look forward to working toward a solution that will ensure that the requirements of the overlay zones are sufficiently met and our City continues to thrive.

Sincerely,

Tracy Johnson
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