Statement from Alderman Nik Kovac, Alderwoman Milele A. Coggs and Alderman Ashanti Hamilton

May 25, 2010

Today's Common Council approval of the Milwaukee River Greenway Overlay District package is a watershed moment for the river and the people of Milwaukee.

The principal legislation we sponsored, and which was unanimously supported by our Council colleagues, makes permanent zoning and design standards meant to improve public access, as well as to protect and preserve the natural and recreational areas along the Milwaukee River corridor between the former North Ave. dam and the city limits at Silver Spring Dr. As a city, we will now be able to move forward while protecting an irreplaceable, prime natural public asset that provides us with natural open space and some of the best hiking trails and scenic vistas found in any large city anywhere in the world.

That said, nothing of value comes easily, and that was certainly the case with this legislation.

It came only after years of community outreach and negotiations with property owners and the Department of City Development. Then there were the meetings – dozens of small group and neighborhood meetings – and then the larger meetings in front of the Plan Commission, Zoning, Neighborhoods and Development Committee, the Public Works Committee, and finally the full Common Council.

We also want to credit and thank citizens and members of several business, residential, recreational, and environmental organizations, most notably the Milwaukee River Work Group, the Urban Ecology Center, the River Revitalization Foundation, Milwaukee Riverkeeper and the Rotary Club, for their insights, suggestions, refinements, and hard work. And we certainly cannot fail to mention the Rotary Club's generous investment of $400,000 in an arboretum to be located within the overlay district.

We firmly believe that today's action by the Council will help ensure that Milwaukeeans and visitors alike will be able to fully embrace the natural beauty of the river corridor for generations to come.

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