



Department of City Development
City Plan Commission
Redevelopment Authority of the City of Milwaukee
Neighborhood Improvement Development Corporation

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October 29, 2015

To The Honorable Members of the Common Council
City of Milwaukee
City Hall, Room 205

Dear Council Members:

I am writing to share the Department of City Development's perspective regarding File No. 150925, which directs \$100,000 from the Commercial Investment Program to 4 Seasons Skate Park. The funds would be used to make a forgivable loan to assist the Park to relocate its operations from the 8th Aldermanic District to the 14th Aldermanic District.

The Commercial Investment Program provides resources to assist small business development throughout the city of Milwaukee. The four matching grant programs within the program help businesses and commercial property owners to improve their building facades and signage, update vacant interior space, and expand employment.

During the first 10 months of 2015, 75 matching grants were provided to businesses in all 15 Aldermanic Districts by the Commercial Investment Program. Each grant required an application from the business or property owner, and each application was approved only after an internal committee reviewed it to ensure it met written program guidelines. To minimize risk to the taxpayers, each of these grants is "reimbursable," meaning that City funds are provided only after work is completed and the grant recipient provides acceptable documentation regarding related expenses and the required matching funds.

We welcome applications for these programs from the 4 Seasons Skate Park. However, we believe it is a mistake to provide a unilateral, "no strings attached" allocation of \$100,000 for this project in the absence of any information about the total cost of the project, the intended use of funds, and the employment impact of the project. This sort of information is required from every applicant to the Commercial Investment Program – even the business that seeks a \$750 grant to defray the costs of a new sign. Advancing File No. 150925 sends the message that reasonable evaluation of proposals to invest taxpayer dollars in private projects is optional, and program guidelines developed in consultation with the Common Council to assure accountability can be set aside. This is a risky approach for investment of City funds.

The requested \$100,000 allocation represents 20% of the amount provided to the Commercial Investment Program in the 2016 capital budget. Allocating \$100,000 to a single business will seriously reduce the access of businesses in your district to resources they need.

We urge a "no" vote on File No. 150925.

Sincerely,

Rocky Marcoux
Commissioner

