

**From:** [Virginia Small](#)  
**To:** [Perez, Jose](#); [Bauman, Robert](#); [Coggs, Milele](#); [Dimitrijevic, Marina](#); [Hamilton, Ashanti](#); [Lee, Chris](#)  
**Cc:** [Johnson, Cavalier](#); [Kovac, Nik](#); [Khalif Rainey](#); [Lewis, Chantia](#); [Murphy, Michael \(Alderman\)](#); [Stamper II, Russell](#); [Dodd, Nikiya](#); [Perez, Jose](#); [ald08@milwaukee.gov](mailto:ald08@milwaukee.gov)  
**Subject:** Proposed tax assessment of Couture project (Item 201062 on ZND agenda)  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 08, 2020 1:55:53 AM

---

Dear Alderperson:

A cursory review of the facts of the so-called Couture project--the name refers to fashionable clothing--is ironically a naked and foolish giveaway of future Milwaukee property tax revenue--for the benefit of the high-living elite.

The projected cost of completing the Couture, as published in the December 2nd edition of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, is \$188 million.

The City's proposed agreement before the Common Council unwisely would have the City of Milwaukee assessing, for tax purposes, the value of the Couture at a mere \$38.3 million--only 20.5 percent of its construction costs. In 20 years, the projected assessment would rise only to \$67.3 million--or about 36 percent of cost.

This is most unusual and dubious.

I checked this week with city assessors in other Milwaukee County and Waukesha County municipalities regarding assessments for newly constructed projects. The customary first assessment on new mixed-use real estate developments is in close keeping with the actual construction costs.

One exception is when part of the project includes mandated shared public amenities, such as a parking structure.

Nonetheless, **the inclusion of such amenities never drastically reduces an assessment to a mere 20 percent of construction investment.**

Essentially, Milwaukee would permit the Couture's developers to build this project as a sweetheart deal--with permanently discounted property-tax obligations. The Couture's privileged owners and renters would enjoy a gob-smacking tax holiday for a generation--to the detriment of every other Milwaukee property-tax-paying resident or renter.

As a lifelong real estate investor/manager, I gladly pay property taxes because they are the lifeblood of a community's infrastructure and critical services. I urge members of this committee and the Common Council to reject this inequitable and harmful proposal. Instead, insist that the Couture's developers, and those who will reside there, pay their full and fair share of property taxes.

Sincerely,

Pat Small  
2860 N. Shepard Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53211

--

Virginia Small  
Independent Journalist

**Land Acknowledgment:** We acknowledge in Milwaukee that we are on traditional Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk and Menominee homeland along the southwest shores of Michigami, North America's largest system of freshwater lakes, where the Milwaukee, Menominee and Kinnickinnic rivers meet and the people of Wisconsin's sovereign Anishinaabe, Ho-Chunk, Menominee, Oneida and Mohican nations remain present."

*-Shared by Electa Quinney Institute for American Indian Education at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

Electa Quinney, a member of the Stockbridge Indian tribe, became Wisconsin's first public school teacher on June 28, 1828.

"An event happening ten minutes or ten years ago matters if anyone can indeed feel the effects of it now." -**Jericho Brown, 2020 Pulitzer Prize for poetry.**

Recent Articles:

**A 12-step Program Toward Antiracism in Milwaukee** <https://shepherdexpress.com/news/features/a-12-step-program-toward-antiracism-in-milwaukee/#/questions/>

**Indian Community School Students Succeed Beyond Their Dreams**

<https://shepherdexpress.com/news/features/indian-community-school-students-succeed-beyond-their-dreams/#/questions>

(Winner of a Silver Medal from Milwaukee Press Club, 2020)

**Cultivating Community in the COVID-19 Era**

<https://shepherdexpress.com/news/features/cultivating-community-in-the-covid-19-era/>