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“Punish the Developer” Does Not Serve Milwaukee’s Needs

**Statement of Alderman Terry L. Witkowski
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Last night’s decision by the Historic Preservation Commission is a case of “The Floggings will Continue until Morale Improves” when it comes to development! Morale will never improve and Milwaukee will not have much, if any, new development!

Why is it that we need to punish developers and make it difficult to do business in Milwaukee?

Yes, the commission finally made a decision that allows the process to move to the Common Council for action, but they did so putting in a “poison pill” clause to kill the \$50 million project. This is an interesting decision to go from “Save the Facades on Milwaukee Street” at the sidewalk to “move the building back 15 feet.” It makes no sense.

Importantly, we need developments such as the Marriott proposal to help us address poverty in Milwaukee. But, you don’t address poverty in Milwaukee by turning down 200 jobs, \$50 million in investment, \$2 million tax revenue, and a top-of-the-line hotel – all at no cost to the city – by requiring a 15-foot setback that kills the project.

In a global economy we need to do all we can to compete with the rest of the world. Would it be a disgrace for Milwaukee to have a first class flagship brand Marriott in downtown? Is there something wrong with having a top of the line brand name here?

As a member of the board of the Wisconsin Center District, I realize Milwaukee needs more hotels and development, not less. Yes, we do need a hotel on 4th and Wisconsin, but we need a 600-room plus convention hotel at that site if we are to truly move back into contention (with cities our size) for attracting more conventions.

I don’t see a line of developers waiting to build in Milwaukee or a skyline full of cranes in our downtown. We need to change direction to streamline processes for development, and not make it more difficult to build here.

I strongly urge the Council to approve the project without the setback requirement called for by the commission.