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Alderman, 8th District

The “Donut Effect” and Milwaukee’s suffocating poverty

**Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan
September 17, 2015**

The article in today’s *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* about how Milwaukee is the fifth poorest big U.S. city is peppered with numbers and statistics, but in my mind it speaks clearly – and sadly – to the reality too many families and children in our city face every day: suffocating poverty and despair.

To be clear, the article about the 2014 U.S. Census Bureau estimates paints a grim picture: Milwaukee’s poverty rate of 29% remained unchanged from a year earlier and was nearly double the national rate of 14.8%.

Among children 18 and under in Milwaukee, the news is even darker, as the poverty rate was 42.1%, according to the Census numbers.

The article notes that the poverty rate among African Americans in Milwaukee was 39.9%, among Hispanics it was 31.8% and among non-Hispanic whites it was 14.8%!

And what is Mayor Barrett doing about the crushing poverty in Milwaukee? He’s prancing around downtown, touting the economic development “renaissance” that is happening in and around downtown.

Now I think an improving downtown is great, but those improvements and that boon certainly isn’t being felt by many, many Milwaukeeans. In fact, it’s produced a “donut effect,” where the outer rings outside of the downtown area (on the south and north sides especially) are decaying and falling farther behind. People in many of those neighborhoods are sadly trapped there, in a cycle of poverty and despair, and those numbers are borne out in the Census estimates.

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I am deeply concerned about those people, and about the future of our city. We need to do more to bring hope and economic opportunity to those Milwaukeeans living outside the “donut hole.”

For starters, it would be great if the mayor would put forth an effort to start a renaissance in poorer city neighborhoods.

The mayor’s parading around downtown in cheerleader mode isn’t helping the poor children and families who need to find hope for the future.

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