

## **COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

### **CHAIR**

- Public Safety and Health

### **MEMBER**

- Steering and Rules
- Anti-Graffiti Policy



**ROBERT G. DONOVAN**  
ALDERMAN, 8TH DISTRICT

# **It's time for Milwaukee to move on from the Couture**

## **Statement from Alderman Bob Donovan July 30, 2019**

I have never been an opponent of the Couture project. I have never wanted the Couture project to fail. But with the news that Barrett Lo Visionary Development, LLC, has again failed to secure necessary funding, I think it is now past time for the City to seek other proposals to develop this very special site.

From the time this proposal was first made public – seven years ago – there were concerns about it. The developer paid what still seems a paltry amount for the property, purchased as it was over the strong objections of advocates for public parks. The entire project seemed highly-leveraged and financially complicated for a complex being built on what is surely one of the most desirable and valuable locations in the State of Wisconsin. And then there's the question of how the Couture ever passed the "but for" test usually required of Tax Incremental Financing Districts to demonstrate that they cannot succeed without public resources.

Even with all this, the bold design – and integration with the Mayor's Streetcar – moved many to hope against reason that it might all come together. We learned last week that this is still not the case. The developer said he will try again to secure funding, but could not say from where and would not even divulge how far away he is from the amount necessary. This might be all well and good if the Couture were a two-acre development far from the lakefront being built with private dollars, but this is a special parcel and the developer has access to \$17.5 million in public funds.

And time is not on the public's side. Milwaukee County tore down a bus terminal, built with federal grant money, and sold the property to Barrett Lo at a favorable price. If the Couture isn't completed in 2020, there is great concern that the federal government will try to get its \$6.7 million in grant money back.

-More-

City Hall Room 205 • 200 East Wells Street • Milwaukee, WI 53202

**PHONE** (414) 286-3533

**FAX** (414) 286-3456

**E-MAIL** [rdonov@milwaukee.gov](mailto:rdonov@milwaukee.gov)

**WEBSITE** [www.milwaukee.gov/district8](http://www.milwaukee.gov/district8)



The City should move on from the Couture. The site should be evaluated, properly packaged, and put out as a request for proposals. With all the development going on downtown, surely someone can do better than the nothing we've seen for the past seven years.

I would also ask my colleagues and fellow residents to remember the fate of the Couture the next time they're told about the Midas touch the streetcar supposedly brings to local development. All the signs are that this is a dying project that was supposed to have a streetcar line running straight through it.

-30-

