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Common Council President



2<sup>nd</sup> District Alderman

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## **Cavalier Johnson**

*City of Milwaukee Common Council*

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 7, 2021

# **We have great progress but also complex opportunities**

## **Statement of Common Council President Cavalier Johnson May 7, 2021**

Throughout the course of 2020 and 2021, we have seen several fantastic things come out of our wonderful city. We are seeing The Couture (a 10-year in the making transformative project!) break ground this week, thus starting the creation of hundreds of new jobs for Milwaukee residents. It will also beautify our lakefront, city skyline, and public transit connectivity. Also, this week, the Common Council voted to approve a development agreement to bring Milwaukee Tool back to the City of Milwaukee at a key downtown location, bringing up to 2,000 new jobs with average salaries of around \$75,000 per year. This new headquarters will allow Milwaukee and Wisconsin to keep more talent here in our home state, and will stimulate jobs and success for a range of small businesses in and near downtown for many years and hopefully decades into the future.

Our COVID-19 response has also been great, and we are seeing the benefits of our hard work through the re-opening of the Fiserv Forum for Milwaukee Bucks games in the Deer District. This re-opening has helped the Deer District reawaken, and we will even be seeing a new Marriott Hotel there in the near future, thanks to all of the success the district is having. We will also be seeing the addition of a new Goodwill headquarters to the 2<sup>nd</sup> District here in Milwaukee, which will further support the families who need the Goodwill services the most.

Although we have clearly seen a lot of good, we still need to address some of the unfortunate events that have been occurring across the city. We need to address the critical issue of shared revenue as we are currently seeing a massive under-funding from the state. Yes, we are continuing to send our contributions to Madison as required but are NOT seeing those dollars return – as they should.

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Also on the issue of funds, the City of Milwaukee is the only larger city in the United States which does not have the ability to collect its own local revenue from sales tax. This puts us at a huge disadvantage, and if we could collect those funds we would have access to exponentially more funds to invest in essential services such as public safety and infrastructure.

Last, our pension contribution in 2023 will be double what it is today and without any additional funding or revenue to help cover the increase.

We need the state Legislature to approve legislation that will allow Milwaukee to establish a sales tax to help fund our municipal needs and reduce the property tax burden on residents and businesses.

We also need to address the recent uptick in gun violence. We have seen far too many young deaths from senseless violence in the past months, and without the support of the community we may not see an end to it in the near future. My Council colleagues and I are calling for citizens to play a bigger role in stopping gun violence, so that we may hopefully be able to prevent more of our children from dying young.

It is important to look at our challenges while we take stock of all the good we are currently doing and of all the good that is still to come.

But our future is also dependent to a large extent on the Legislature. A sales tax and state funding allocations can have huge impacts on the wellbeing of the finances of the City of Milwaukee, and I am confident we can continue to boost the health and commerce of the city with increased support and partnership with legislators in Madison.

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