

Community Benefit Agreement Statement of Support

We are here today as religious and spiritual leaders concerned about the quality of life in our region, and in particular about the re-development of one of our most prized resources, our waterfront. Decisions being made about the Canal Side development will have an enormous impact on this area for years to come.

Discussions have developed with a sense of crisis and urgency rather than clarity and long range vision. It is true that this process has taken far longer than expected or desired. But having taken this long, surely we have enough time to do it properly and avoid further conflict in the future. The common good needs to be our greatest concern.

Not only the decisions being made but the process being used is of concern to us. Our traditions teach us to value transparency, mutual respect, and inclusion. We are here to urge the Common Council to ensure that these values inform their decision making. We believe this is not possible without all parties – developers, politicians, and community organizations – at the table. Furthermore, the process must be one which finds common ground and brings people closer together rather than encouraging polarization and divisiveness.

In March of this year, the Common Council unanimously resolved that it would not transfer city-owned property to the State's Harbor Corporation unless Harbor Corporation officials entered into a Community Benefit Agreement with community representatives. We firmly believe that an agreement can be reached, and that there is already much common ground to work from. We understand that negotiations to reach a Community Benefit Agreement were just initiated by the Harbor Corporation and we applaud this effort.

For that reason we ask that the Council refrain from taking further action on this matter until substantive meetings have taken place among all parties concerned. We trust that well-intentioned people working together will produce a better result than working in isolation from one another. There is no harm that can come of these groups meeting together in good faith and profound good that can emerge for all of us.