

Labor Management Viewpoints: Fulfilling the Park East compact

April 13, 2005

Considering the requirements of the Park East Redevelopment Compact, it is clear that the union construction industry is best situated to build the Park East.

As an industry, we are committed – with labor and management working together – to ensure Milwaukee's Park East is developed to maximize its potential while fulfilling the PERC requirements. Union contractors and trades people are dedicated to following the provisions in the PERC, including training, minority development and paying living wages to all workers.

Our dedication to training – especially among minorities – makes us especially qualified to build the Park East. The PERC requires that the people working on the Park East project have a racial background that mirrors the diversity in the community. Our industry-funded Building Industry Group Skilled Trade Employment Program focuses on training minorities to become skilled-trades people. This commitment gives us a skilled work force prepared to fulfill this component of the PERC.

A firm desire to training is a critical component of the PERC. In fact, firms that do not commit to training are not likely to work on the Park East. The union construction industry offers unparalleled training and apprenticeship programs for all trades people in our field. We have done so for generations and we will continue to do so. This is another example of labor and management working together.

This ongoing commitment adds up to the fact that our contractors and trades people are ready and willing to get started as soon as possible. We don't have to build a work force – or import one from out of state. We are ready now.

The PERC states that workers must be paid prevailing wages, which is a principle with which we completely agree and support. We recognize trades people need to be fairly compensated for their excellent work. We also know they are raising families and participating in the communities they live and work in. By paying them sustainable wages, we are enriching and investing in the entire community.

Union contractors and trades people are dedicated to building a vibrant Milwaukee, adding to its appeal as a destination city. We have collectively built many of the entertainment and business venues in the region. We welcome the Park East challenge.

Lyle Balistreri is president of the Milwaukee Building and Construction Trades Council.