

Gov. Walker unveiled his economic plan for Sherman Park and other depressed areas of Milwaukee today, and his plan is more hype than substance.

MILWAUKEE - Governor Walker unveiled his economic plan for Sherman Park and other depressed areas of Milwaukee today near the site of civil unrest two weeks ago.

Citizen Action of Wisconsin and our community allies are calling for major investments in Sherman Park and other economically distressed neighborhoods at the scale necessary to dramatically increase opportunity and reduce racial disparities in income and employment.

Rather than offering outcome and evidence based solutions that would actually address the deep economic crisis on Milwaukee's north side, Walker is offering a grab bag of small scale initiatives and repurposed federal and state dollars which will not dramatically expand economic opportunity. Like his Transform Milwaukee initiative, this plan is more hype than substance.

Walker's plan also does nothing to address the crisis in wages. Most of the new jobs currently being created in Milwaukee and Wisconsin do not lift families out of poverty. This low wage economy depresses spending, further damaging small business and further reducing job opportunities.

Walker's plan also blames workers for the lack of family supporting jobs, relying on the non-evidence based assumption that additional job training will by itself cause job creation to scale. Stunningly, Walker cites a line from the movie the Field of Dreams: "If you build it they will come."

Citizen Action released an opportunity agenda last year which details the elements of accountable economic development policy which can guarantee economic opportunity for

everyone in Wisconsin.

Some of the core elements missing from Walker's plan includes:

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Specific outcome goals on how many community residents will land and retain family sustaining jobs.

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Policies to raise wages or guarantee that any new jobs created will lift families out of poverty.

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Accountability measures to hold each investment to specific outcome goals, and to reclaim money from corporations that do not create the jobs they promise, or outsource jobs out of Wisconsin.

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Specific racial equity goals which speak to the stark gap in opportunity between people of color communities and the more prosperous part of the Milwaukee Metro area.

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Safeguards against corporations taking state money from outsourcing other jobs, cancelling out the benefits of public investments.

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Tracking of outcome to make sure the people who need jobs the most, low income residents from economically depressed and segregated neighborhoods, are getting their fair share of jobs which are created.

The lack of specific goals and accountability is clear in WEDC's existing Milwaukee projects. Citizen Action of Wisconsin analyzed current WEDC funded projects in the City of Milwaukee, and based on WEDC's own information finds that 87.5% have no specific job creation goals. In fact, projects with no job creation goals account for 94% of WEDC spending in Milwaukee.

"Even if Governor Walker's program was fully funded by the Legislature, I predict that in five years economic conditions will be little different in Sherman Park and other neighborhoods like it," said Robert Kraig, Executive Director of Citizen Action of Wisconsin. "If we are ever going to get serious about economic opportunity, we need to set concrete job creation and job placement goals up to the scale of the problems, and hold ourselves accountable to the outcome. Walker's plan is more of the same, repurposed federal and state dollars designed to give the Governor public relations cover, not address the absence of economic opportunity for African Americans in Milwaukee. Sherman Park and other distressed communities are crying out for large scale solutions, not more of the same old politics."