



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
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Meeting Minutes - Approved PLAN COMMISSION

This meeting can be viewed LIVE on Madison City Channel, cable channel 98, digital channel 994, or at www.madisoncitychannel.tv.

Monday, November 9, 2009

5:30 PM

215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Room 300 (Madison Municipal Building)

DOWNTOWN PLAN WORKING SESSION

Note: Please disregard the note above about this meeting being televised, which only pertains to regular Plan Commission meetings. This session will NOT be televised!

****Note** Quorum of the Common Council may be in attendance at this meeting.**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Present: 8 -

Lauren Cnare; Julia S. Kerr; Nan Fey; Eric W. Sundquist; Judy K. Olson;
Judy Bowser; Michael A. Basford and Tim Gruber

Excused: 4 -

Michael Schumacher; James C. Boll; Michael G. Heifetz and Douglas J.
Pearson

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ledell Zellers, 510 North Carroll Street, stated that she wanted the Plan Commission to emphasize character areas and encourage them to protect those important areas in our downtown that make Madison unique.

On a motion by Basford, seconded by Kerr, the Commission unanimously approved informal consideration and discussion for this evening's meeting.

Tonight's session is not a public hearing. Those wishing to address the Plan Commission should do so during the Public Comment section of the agenda. The Commission may choose to discuss items raised during the Public Comment period at this meeting but are encouraged to schedule time during an upcoming working session to discuss a Public Comment item.

STAFF PRESENTATION

Bill Fruhling gave a presentation of previous downtown planning efforts and an overview of the current Downtown Plan process to date.

PLAN COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Planning Staff presented a list of major issues that need to be discussed by the Plan Commission. Staff noted that the list of these issues is not exhaustive, but does provide a basis of some of the larger issues and decisions that will have to be made during the recommendation process.

Discussion on major Issues for each theme area

Moving Around - Presented by Brad Murphy

Ald. Kerr was concerned about parking issues at the area that could be the transportation center at Bedford Street and West Washington Avenue.

Mr. Gruber wanted staff to share information at the next meeting on the previous circulator routes that had been tried and failed.

Ms. Bowser asked if there was consideration of two-way streets on Johnson and Gorham Streets. Ald. Kerr added that she believes that recommendation should be in the plan considering that it is in the Tenney Lapham Neighborhood plan.

Mr. Gruber asked staff about who would make the final recommendations on one-way to two-way conversions. Staff replied that traffic engineering and several transportation commissions would weigh in on those decisions. Mr. Gruber added that we should study all of the one-way streets to see if they are working the way that they should, or if there are better alternatives, keeping in mind the overall goal of downtown connectivity, including multi-modal transportation, bicycles, buses etc. Ald. Kerr added that perhaps we should only study streets of a certain width for potential conversion considering the limitations of smaller streets.

Mr. Basford stated that we need to look at inter-city rail and how that would connect into a transportation center. Also, if we want to see a downtown rail stop, where should it go?

Mr. Sundquist added that we should be broad about looking at one-way street issues, and noted that East Washington Avenue handled the traffic and was a good test when there was construction on the Johnson/Gorham pair this past year. He also added that staff should look to see if the Monona Terrace is suitable for a multi-modal station, as once considered. Ms Olsen stated that in a previous rail study they looked at the physical issues associated with the Monona Terrace rail station, and aid that staff should review those findings.

Ald. Kerr asked staff to look at other cities that have had to retrofit rail stops into an existing city/system.

Downtown Living - Presented by Rebecca Cnare

Commissioners asked about the current occupancy/vacancy rates for downtown apartments and condominiums. Staff replied that as of a few months ago there were approximately 200 condo listings in the Isthmus/downtown, however, they did not know the apartment vacancy rates.

Ald. Kerr said that she thinks it is important to increase the quality of housing for students.

Ald. Cnare asked about the relationship between employment and housing over time, and where do developers decide where development will occur. Staff replied that in general development occurs where land assembly is easiest, and that there is a relationship between land value and improvement value.

Mr. Gruber asked about how much more development, along with its associated parking, can we add without congesting our streets?

Mr. Basford added that affordability is also an issue especially as related to students and service sector employees, and should be added to the list of major issues, and noted that the zoning rewrite could help with this concern.

Mr. Sundquist is concerned about gentrification, and that staff should look at policy tools to balance the need for growth and the concerns about gentrification.

At 7pm, Ms. Fey was excused, and Ms. Bowser resumed as the Chair of the Commission for the remainder of the meeting.

Downtown Working and Business - Presented by Michael Waidelich

Ald. Kerr asked if we were being nostalgic about wanting to have employment growth in the downtown

since employment has been leaving city centers over the last 40 years. Perhaps we should re-think our overarching employment goals. She added that it would be valuable to talk to employers about what it would take in order to get employment growth downtown.

Mr. Sundquist added that we may be missing some of the Economic Development specifics, like the idea of growth coming in the form of conventions, visitors and tourists.

Mr. Sundquist added that we should reach out to the state government and ask for them to commit, perhaps with an executive order, to keep their employees in buildings that are downtown and in urban areas with access to public transportation.

Mr. Sundquist also stated that we need to look at parking availability issues. Perhaps an inventory of public and private parking, along with a visibility and wayfinding plan to direct people to the parking spots could help alleviate some of those problems.

Arts, Culture and Entertainment - Parks, Open Space and Recreation - Presented by Archie Nicolette

Ald. Cnare stated the importance of the connection between entertainment and our large open spaces.

Mr. Gruber stated that he is opposed to filling in the lake for an expanded law park.

Ald. Kerr stated that she thinks there is a lack of tree canopy in the campus district, and that the city need to have a policy to add more trees in deficient areas.

Ms. Bowser asked if the Parks Division was on board with the master planning goals for the two large parks.

Mr. Sundquist noted that there should be a more formal consideration for facilities for all of the people that fish along the lakeshores.

Ms. Olsen asked if there are any other proposals for getting connecting people to the lakes. Staff replied that they are looking at more pedestrian connections over John Nolan Drive as well as looking at removing some of the riprap, in order to design a more urban waterfront with an easier direct relationship between people and the water.

Ald. Kerr noted that she thinks the extension of the campus mall is a great idea to connect people between the lakes.

Land Use and Urban Design - Presented by Bill Fruhling

Ald. Kerr noted that staff should use less loaded language than "architecturally insignificant" when determining redevelopment opportunities. She added that the city should consider up-zoning with the new zoning code for areas that are better suited for redevelopment.

Mr. Basford asked how the city could actively pursue redevelopment in certain areas, noting that perhaps up-zoning could be a good tool to encourage developers to develop in the best suited areas.

Ms. Bowser liked the setbacks that are proposed along the view corridors.

Ald. Kerr noted that some of the small retail doesn't work just because the size of the spaces available is too small. Mr. Gruber added that retail nodes are very tricky; noting that just one block off of State Street is a very different retail environment than on State Street itself.

Ms. Olsen asked staff to look at the potential historic districts for both State Street and the Langdon area.

ADJOURNMENT

**A motion was made by Gruber, seconded by Olson, to Adjourn at 8:20 p.m.
The motion passed by voice vote/other.**