

MEMO

To: Economic Development Subcommittee
From: Smart Growth Greater Madison
Re: Downtown Plan
Date: 1/23/2012

Smart Growth Greater Madison additional specific language recommendations to Downtown Plan based on continued discussion with our members following the meetings of the Economic Development Committee subcommittee. Whereas predictability in the process is desirable, flexibility is a necessity to allow for projects that achieve the overarching goals of the City of Madison for future redevelopment. We concur that increased density, transportation alternatives, sustainability, and excellence in architecture should be in our vision for Madison. Because this is a plan that is meant to reach decades into the future, it seems reasonable to include acknowledgment of and mechanisms for flexibility in how we achieve the longer term goals.

Recommendation 17: Promote high quality architecture and craftsmanship for new buildings to reinforce the downtown area as an engaging and attractive employment location.

(Smart Growth supports this recommendation, but in order to implement this, there needs to be flexibility in the Plan and ensuing Zoning Code).

Zoning Code Text:

Planned Development Districts

(3) Relationship to Other Applicable Regulations.

(a) In General. A Planned Development shall comply with all standards, procedures, and regulations of this ordinance that are applicable to the individual uses within the development.

(b) Subdivision Requirement. All land within a Planned Development District shall be platted into one or more lots in compliance with the requirements of the subdivision and platting regulations. The development plan for the Planned Development shall include the necessary information to serve as a preliminary plat.

~~(c) Downtown Height Regulations. All Planned Developments within the Downtown Districts shall comply with the height limits of those districts.~~

Recommendation 44:

In order to do this, modify recommendation 44 on page 41 to read, "Establish maximum heights as shown on the maximum height building heights map and incorporate them into the zoning code ordinance to provide variety and reflect and enhance varied topography downtown. **Ensure regulations contain a discretionary mechanism to allow flexibility.**

This is relevant both for employment and mixed use or residential redevelopment as it pertains to excellence and creativity in architecture and craftsmanship.

Mifflin/Bassett:

Recommendation 66: Develop a detailed ~~conservation/redevelopment~~ strategy for this area. ~~that combines rehabilitating houses, moving houses, and demolishing some structures to facilitate new development as illustrated in the concept plan, possibly including a Neighborhood Conservation District.~~

Recommendation 68: ~~Establish a pedestrian friendly mid-block urban lane between and parallel to West Washington Ave in the 400 and 500 block to allow development in rear yards.~~

Recommendation 70: ~~Consider establishing a Neighborhood Conservation District as identified in the Downtown Historic Preservation Plan.~~

Recommendation 160: ~~Establish local Historic Districts as identified in this Downtown Plan.~~

“The intent is not simply to allow a taller building, but to encourage and reward buildings of truly exceptional design that respond to the specific context of their location and accomplish specific objectives defined for the area.” If you want truly exceptional buildings, you have to account for the costs and considerations that go into designing them. Having overly proscriptive requirements stifle architectural creativity and undermine the goal of exceptional design.

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3) Provide a stepback ~~of at least 30 feet from the face of all street facades~~ for stories about the fifth story, **where applicable**.

5) Incorporate one or more National Register contributing buildings on or near the building site into the development and include their exterior restoration into the development project **when feasible**.

The city could also consider recommending incentives that alleviate the financial burden of complying with more stringent criteria. The emphasis on both historic preservation and achieving an extremely high bar of design are not easily accomplished and we should eliminate, where possible, overly burdensome regulatory stipulations that prevent the implementation of these values.