

*March 5, 2012*

*Wisconsin State Journal  
Editorial Page Editor*

*Regarding the March 5 editorial about Fairchild Street:*

*Drawing from 54 years in the practice of architecture and as an admirer and student of cities, I heartily support the general concept of the Frautschi proposal for the redevelopment of the 100 Block of State Street including the replacement of buildings designated for replacement in that proposal.*

*I also heartily endorse and support the need and intention to enhance the character of Fairchild Street, But I whole heartedly urge that a solution other than that proposed be adopted for the redevelopment of the Fairchild streetscape. Here are the reasons for my opposition.*

*For a better solution, look first at the motivation prompting the Frautschi proposal. It is to enhance the view of and the view from the Overture Center: a commendable and worthy intention. But in its execution with the outdoor garden, it results in two significant shortcomings.*

*First; the garden will be embarrassingly small in scale, overwhelmed by the massive lobby of the Overture which the garden is to complement. Its depth is such that it will not afford the viewing perspective needed to admire that major feature of the Center. Recognizing that Overture was conceived as an alabaster temple upon a hill, a Parthenon if you will, to be viewed looking upward from a distant perspective. Lacking space, that aspiration will be denied. Instead, it is embedded in the densest part of our urban setting. In my opinion, the garden is entirely inadequate for the intentions of the proposers.*

*Second and most significant, the proposed garden solution diminishes the character and appeal of that part of the city. Streets are the "ROOMS" of the City. Buildings are the "WALLS" that define and create those urban rooms. The world's most admired towns and cities derive that admiration from the character and appeal of their streetscapes.*

*These "spaces in between," the well defined streets, are the means to concentrate people and social activities that give cities "LIFE and VITALITY". The garden as proposed, dissolves the "street" at the major façade of Overture, substituting an amorphous, ill defined uncomfortably scaled. unbuilt space: a "MISSING TOOTH" in the Fairchild streetscape. It promotes a syndrome much too evident in our Downtown.*

*Additionally, the proposed garden diminishes the urban open space impact of the Square, the most impressive and significant urban open space in the State. As mentioned, the 'SPACES IN BETWEEN" are dependent on the enclosure of buildings for their character and impact. The garden siphons off that impact from the most active corner of the Square. Viewing Overture is important, but not worthy of diminishing the Square.*

*However, that unfortunate result can be avoided. There is an alternative approach that can meet the Frautschis' goals without diminishing the character of the Square nor sacrificing the vitality of the "STREET" .This alternative is the introduction of a glass enclosed WINTERGARTEN; with an interior garden. It provides the view, preserves the the URBAN ROOM, and creates a year around urban concentrated, all weather, social space as an overture to OVERTURE. Perhaps there is no need for an ultimatum.*

*KENTON PETERS AIA  
Architect*