



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Economic Development Division

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TO: Jeanne Hoffman, Facilities and Sustainability Manager

FROM: Matthew B. Mikolajewski, Office of Business Resources Manager *MBM*

SUBJECT: Sustainability Plan Draft Comments

DATE: March 10, 2011

Following are my comments regarding the 2011 draft of the City's Sustainability Plan. I would like to begin by thanking you and the Sustainable Design and Energy Committee for all the improvements that have been made to the plan since the last draft was circulated to City staff. Although the document is much improved, I still have some further suggestions as follows:

- Goal 7 within Natural Systems calls for developing "more stringent requirements than those outlined in NR 151 and Dane County Chapter 14 standards." This goal continues with a suggestion to increase taxation of impervious pavement not already taxed by the stormwater utility. How will these more stringent standards and taxation compare with requirements within the region's suburban communities, and could this not inadvertently foster additional development within suburban and rural areas around Madison?
- I have several comments regarding Goal 2 under Planning and Design as follows:
 - One goal calls for establishing maximum parking thresholds (x stalls per thousand sq. ft.). This requirement is problematic because different users within a single building type will have different parking requirements. For example, a law firm and a call center within the same office building would have very different parking needs. A maximum parking threshold may unintentionally drive-away prospective employers who do not wish to follow the variance requirements.
 - Another goal calls for "developing guidelines for developers and committees to follow when creating and reviewing plans to re-invent shopping malls." Rather than developing guidelines, perhaps the City could work directly with the owners/operators of shopping malls to discuss what might be done to increase density on their properties.
 - Finally, one of the goals calls for "granting vacant and derelict properties conditional use for community gardens." Experience has demonstrated that it is politically very difficult to remove community gardens from a parcel once they have been established. The primary goal of the City with regard to vacant and derelict properties should be to see them redevelop.

- Goal 4 under Planning & Design calls for promoting and fostering local food systems through the expansion of urban agriculture. Madison differs from other communities exploring urban agriculture in that we are surrounded by some of the most productive agricultural land within the country within a very short distance from downtown Madison. I recommend that this goal expand the definition of "local food systems" to include the entire eight-county Thrive region. Rather than focus solely on bringing agriculture into the City, I think this goal should include actions related to making better connections between businesses/organizations within the City and existing farms in south-central Wisconsin. How can Madison enhance its role as a distribution point for the region's food and food-related products to the rest of the world?
- One of the action items under Goal 2 of Transportation calls for requiring all new developments to include a Transportation Demand Management Plan that prioritizes all transportation modes. Prior to requiring TDMs, it may be appropriate to reach-out to the business community to learn more about what is needed to enhance alternative modes of transportation for their employees. For example, we currently have major employers and employment centers within the City of Madison that have little or no access to Madison Metro service.
- One of the actions within Goal 1 of Carbon & Energy calls for "researching impacts of downtown toll zones ... that target reducing the numbers of vehicles and resulting emissions from central city." We should continue to encourage major employers, retailers, visitors, and residents to live, work, and recreate downtown. Downtown is already very accessible without a car, and many already travel to downtown on buses, bikes, etc. Downtown tolls could discourage people from living, working, and recreating in downtown Madison, and will likely foster increased development in areas outside of downtown not as well served by buses and bikes. Downtown tolls could actually increase total citywide vehicle emissions, rather than reduce them.
- Goal 3 under Carbon & Energy calls for "improving new buildings and developments." Specific concerns that I have regarding the actions contained therein include:
 - "Develop, adopt, and implement green building to help guide new commercial construction by 2012." Are these going to be requirements or recommendations of the development community?
 - "Charge a green building fee." Charge a green building fee to who, how will it be used, and how much will it be?
 - "Design buildings so that each cycle of standards will improve the energy efficiency of new construction by approximately 15%." Is this just for public buildings, or is it for private buildings as well?
 - "Require a minimum 50% vegetated green roof on all new City and commercially constructed buildings." I question if this requirement is financially feasible in Madison's northern climate with current technologies. Perhaps this requirement should be limited to only new City buildings.
- Goal 6 under Carbon & Energy calls for "developing a carbon footprint estimate for all facilities and activities within City limits (residential, commercial, industrial sites)." Who will be responsible for this, and what is its purpose?
- Goal 7 of economic development calls for "starting in 2011, City Economic Development staff will monitor and promote informal economic activities." I would strike this action in favor of the other two actions noted within this goal. The other two actions seem more appropriate for Economic Development Division staff.

- Goal 2 within Employment & Workforce calls for "city funds support organizations." What support organizations are contemplated under this recommendation?
- Goal 5 under Employment & Workforce calls for supporting green/cleantech job training. Who will provide this training? I believe the goal should specifically reference the resources of the Workforce Development Board of South Central Wisconsin and Madison College.