

June 15, 2011

Dear Members of the EDC and ALRC:

I write as a mother of four college aged students (who have provided me with many comments on the ordinance), someone whose family knows first-hand the negative outcomes of alcohol abuse, and as someone who has been actively involved in Madison's downtown for over 30 years. I also work for a company that owns real estate within the ALDO area and as such understand the retail market in this area. I am asking that your support and adopt the BID position on the proposed Alcohol License Density Plan not because of my work involvement but because of my personal concern about this issue.

The issue of college age alcohol abuse is real. It is real for all ages in our society. It is particularly a problem in Wisconsin with its culture of drinking. In raising my children I was dismayed at how adults misused alcohol in front of their children and wondered why those children when they became teens used alcohol as the way to "have fun" mirroring the behavior their parents modeled over the years, and how parents just accepted their teenagers drinking at graduation parties and once they went to college. It is a real issue requiring a long hard look at our drinking culture. Thinking ALDO will solve the problem is to ignore better solutions as we know it has not reduced alcohol related crime and disorder.

If a survey of college students were done, I suspect you will hear them tell you the current Aldo has not stopped them from drinking. They will and do wait outside a popular establishment if it is full to get in when others leave. They will and do go to establishments outside the ALDO area. They do and will have house parties. The students have gotten smart on how to have these house parties. I don't believe they have reduced in number. Students have told me they now just do in basements, put foil over basement windows to block the light and don't allow attendance and noise to get out of hand so they are discovered. The use or misuse of alcohol is just spreading out beyond the ALDO area and into unsupervised and more dangerous venues such as house parties.

It is very unfortunate we have yet to be able to attract more non-alcohol and food establishments to the ALDO area. This has been a goal of many for decades. We would all like to see a better mix of retail. But the reasons for this lack of retail are also complex and will not and may never be "fixed" although we will all keep trying.

In the meantime, the ALDO area is also the natural and needed entertainment and visitor area for Madison. And attracting a better mix of these establishments can be positive for the area. Yet the ALDO's proposed requirements for these venues will do the opposite.

I applaud efforts to address the overconsumption of alcohol. But I sincerely believe the ALDO plan gives the ALRC and policy makers a false sense of accomplishment by its existence. It allows policy makers to believe they are having an impact on a very serious and very complicated problem when we know from

analysis of ALDO to date it has accomplished nothing. My greatest concern is it creates a sense of "doing something" when the real issue is not being addressed at all.

I agree wholeheartedly with the BID's position statement. It identifies clearly that there are many other more important and effective measures that are being ignored and/or not addressed that could have a greater impact on the problem we all seek to address. I hope that you will consider the BID's comments seriously and know that we all have the same goal, but need a different direction.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Springman