

To: Madison Plan Commission
From: Peter Ostlind
Re: Downtown Plan – Staff report dated June 11, 2012
Date: June 11, 2012

Some thoughts regarding the changes to the downtown plan as presented in the recent staff report.

Page 27 of the Plan, Recommendation 21: With the changes in the maximum height map the references to redevelopment of the 1960's zero lot line buildings would seem to only apply to the Bassett district and perhaps a site within one of the historic districts. These sites have never been specifically identified. For Recommendation 20 regarding the out of context buildings a wording change was made to implement this through the development of the new zoning code. A similar wording change is probably warranted for this Recommendation 21. Just what constitutes a 1960's zero lot line building that could redevelop at 2 or possibly 3 stories above the norm for the for an area is not entirely clear. The writer may understand this today but will readers in the future have the same understanding? I believe staff has not felt that creating a separate zoning category for these buildings is the appropriate method but something ought to be done to insure that the intent of the recommendation can be clearly interpreted.

Page 8 of the Report, referencing page 38 of the Plan: There is new wording that appears to be providing a description if not a definition of what the word density means within the Plan. In particular the wording talks about increased density. A statement should be added that the increased density noted here is in relation to the density of the older buildings within a district and not in relation to newer buildings constructed since say, 2000.

Page 10 of the Report, referencing page 42 of the Plan: There is proposed wording that rooftop open spaces should not be counted as a story when considering height. This has merit as long as the structure on top of the roof is minimized. For the first several readings of this language I kept seeing the wording "... limited common areas ..." in the framework of typical condominium language rather than actually limiting the size of the physical structure. While I understand this was not staff's intent perhaps some minor wording change is in order to insure clarity. Wording such as very limited common areas, small common areas, or small amounts of common area might be an improvement. Without this the common area could start to include such things as bathrooms, small kitchens for serving food or spaces to use the roof top during inclement weather. Perhaps limiting the structure to solely that necessary to provide access to the rooftop would be a better approach. This does not preclude the ability to provide enhanced rooftop open spaces, they would just have to count as a floor level.

Page 53 of the Plan, Recommendation 71: Given the new direction envisioned for the Mifflin district the 400-500 blocks of W. Washington and W. Main St. no longer share a similar vision. There are some specific statements in the plan that provide a very different vision for these blocks than the new vision for the Mifflin district. (Including a PC comment of page 13 of the Report that these blocks are excluded

from the Mifflin district.) Therefore Recommendation 71 incorporating these blocks into the implementation strategy for the Mifflin district should be deleted.

Design Standards: The Report makes several references to “new design standards” being developed to implement the recommendations of the Plan. Does this anticipate the creation of new Urban Design Districts? Or how are these design standards intended to be implemented? The references to design standards are found on page 32 of the Report in recommendation 71 for the State Street district, page 34 of the Report in paragraph 2 discussing W. Washington and of page 34 of the Report in paragraph 4 regarding the Mifflin district where the possibility of an Urban Design District is specifically mentioned.

Page 19 of the Report: In the first box about page 78 of the Plan the last part of the last sentence “...and make the following segments a priority for this study” should probably be deleted since the references for the segments have been deleted.