



City of Madison

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
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Meeting Minutes - Approved PLAN COMMISSION

This meeting can be viewed LIVE on Madison City Channel, cable channel 98, digital channel 994, or at www.madisoncitychannel.tv.

Wednesday, February 17, 2010

5:30 PM

215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Room LL-110 (Madison Municipal Building)

DOWNTOWN PLAN WORKING SESSION

Note: Please disregard the note above about this meeting being televised, which only pertains to regular Plan Commission meetings. This session will NOT be televised!

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Jim Boll chaired the work session.

Present: 7 -

Julia S. Kerr; Nan Fey; Eric W. Sundquist; Judy K. Olson; James C. Boll;
Judy Bowser and Michael A. Basford

Excused: 5 -

Michael Schumacher; Lauren Cnare; Michael G. Heifetz; Tim Gruber and
Douglas J. Pearson

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jonathan Cooper, representing Capitol Neighborhoods Inc. (CNI), handed out excerpts from a previously-submitted communication that covers the items to be discussed at this meeting. He explained that CNI feels that Alternative A for W. Washington (preservation) and Alternative B for the Mifflin Area (limited redevelopment) fit in the best with CNI's recommendations. He also noted a desired boundary change between the South Hamilton and Bassett sub areas. Ald. Kerr asked if CNI wants them to preserve the houses on the 400 and 500 blocks of W Washington Avenue. Mr. Cooper replied that they think preservation is important due to the character of West Washington Avenue and the view up the Avenue towards the Capitol.

Sam Polstein, representing the Associated Students of Madison (ASM) Legislative Affairs Committee, explained that the ASM Committee met about the proposed alternatives for the Mifflin sub area and the students were most interested in Alternative A (preservation). He added that he hoped that there could be an additional meeting with students about this area.

Jim Skrentny, representing the First Settlement District of CNI, said that property owners were urban pioneers and substantially improved the character and value of the neighborhood. He thinks that it is important to strengthen the historic district, promote good and appropriate infill, increase education and establish a physical identity for the district, as well as improve the residential character of the district.

Bruce Bosben, Apex Properties Group, has a few projects that he has been working on in the Downtown and feels that these have been singled out on the Generalized Land Use and Conceptual Pattern of Building Heights Maps to thwart his proposals. He feels that the map shrinks the Downtown Core to too small of an area. Ms. Bowser asked if he just wants his project in a mixed-use area, or is it about the size? Mr. Bosben would like the sites at W. Wilson Street at Henry Street, and at E. Mifflin Street and N. Webster Street included in the "Downtown Mixed Use Center" District on the Generalized Land Use Map. Ald. Kerr would like staff to meet with Mr. Bosben to describe how these concepts were developed relevant to the locations that he has described.

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PLAN COMMISSION DISCUSSION OF DOWNTOWN PLAN

This Item was Discussed and discussion will continue.

City staff gave a brief outline of what they would like to accomplish at this meeting and noted that Commissioner Gruber sent along written comments in his absence.

Sub-Area: Mifflin/West Washington/Bassett/ South Hamilton

Staff provided an overview of this sub-area.

Ms. Fey asked about preserving an intact section of Mifflin for historic reasons and letting the balance evolve with redevelopment. She asked about potential financial mechanisms to conserve/preserve, stating that if the City could help fund it, then maybe we could preserve an area.

Ms. Olson said that the subtext seems to be if we are interested in saving/preserving, some financial mechanism is needed or we end up just putting it off for another generation. She said she wouldn't mind it if the plan made a strong statement about financial support.

Mr. Basford is skeptical of small-cap financing schemes that were tried with limited success in the Basset Neighborhood.

Ald. Kerr is reluctant to have the preservation option in the plan, as the City will continue to see PUD applications all over the neighborhood. She added that there are not many more places with such great access and location that could support higher density housing as there is in Mifflin. She added that just because we have a nostalgic attachment to an area doesn't mean it is economically sustainable. She added that she would also not support a strong statement for financial backing in the plan.

Ms. Olson stated that if we don't put money behind it, it won't happen.

Ms. Fey clarified that she would prefer: Alternative A for W. Washington Avenue, keeping a small area of Alternative A at the Mifflin and Basset intersection, and then have alternatives B and C for the remainder that could ramp up in scale to 6 and 8 stories adjacent to W. Johnson Street. Ald. Kerr said that staff could look into finding the strongest intact area of buildings of Mifflin, but in general the area could be redeveloped.

Ms. Olson stated that she is not necessarily advocating for conservation, but thinks that the area could retain its identity/character as a distinct sub-area - a neighborhood.

Ald. Kerr thinks that W. Washington Avenue could be redeveloped to a much higher intensity. Taller buildings would be appropriate on such a wide street. Ms. Bowser agreed with the idea of redeveloping W. Washington Avenue.

Mr. Basford stated that his most important goal would be to preserve the pedestrian scale and character of both W. Washington Avenue and Mifflin Street, noting that this could be done with higher density development by using stepbacks and building design and developing the interior of the blocks. Ms. Olson added that the standards of design would need to be very high for any redevelopment. Ms. Fey also suggested looking at developing the interior of the blocks.

Sub-Area: Johnson Street Bend/West Rail and Tobacco Warehouse

Staff provided an overview of this sub-area.

Ald. Kerr said that she is very supportive of a new City park as described, stating this should be a major City initiative. Mr. Boll and others agreed. There were no more questions/comments.

Sub-Area: James Madison Park / First Settlement

Staff provided an overview of this sub-area.

Ald. Kerr referred to the height map for the James Madison Park sub-area, noting that most families will want to live in single-family homes, not 3-4 story buildings. Staff noted that 3 stories is very similar to the existing housing stock which generally range from 2 to 3 stories, and that the height limit is meant to reflect the existing scale of the neighborhood.

Mr. Basford questioned not showing taller buildings on E. Wilson Street. Staff noted which buildings are part of local/national historic districts and which are designated landmarks.

Ms. Olson thinks that the "Plan Direction" for First Settlement seems generally consistent with the neighborhood's position, and brought up the Old Market Row development as a project which has a great façade that faces the neighborhood, but has the problem of being too deep, clashing with the scale of the interior of the block. This type of street facade could be encouraged, but the mass should not be encouraged here. She adds that the Brayton Lot should be a focus.

Mr. Sundquist noted that making James Madison Park a family area will be difficult as long as Johnson -Gorham is a one-way pair. He thinks that this plan should make a statement about changing those streets to two-way.

Mr. Basford agreed with Mr. Sundquist, and adds that the city needs to express how they can encourage and implement recommendations/financial support for family supportive housing.

Ms. Bowser noted that in the past, she has learned that it will require a large study to determine the feasibility of changing the one-way pairs into two-way streets as they affect the whole city's transportation network, and not just this neighborhood. However, if the Plan Commission believes that changing Johnson-Gorham is important, then they should still recommend it in the Downtown Plan.

Ms. Fey, Ald. Kerr and Ms. Olson agreed that the height map should be changed so that it matches the detailed plans for the Brayton Lot.

Sub-Area: Langdon / Mansion Hill /Lakefront

Staff provided an overview of this sub-area.

Ald. Kerr thinks that the height map is not fine grained enough in this area and may not match up with the goals. She considers Mansion Hill and Langdon is completely different areas.

Ms. Fey supports the idea of reviewing/updating all or at least the oldest historic district ordinance language to match the more recent/more detailed ones.

In general, the Commission seemed to support the idea of a mid-block pedestrian path in the Langdon District.

ADJOURNMENT

**A motion was made by Sundquist, seconded by Fey, to Adjourn at 6:55 p.m.
The motion passed by voice vote/other.**