



## Office of the Mayor

David J. Cieslewicz

City-County Building, Room 403  
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703  
(Phone) 608 266 4611  
(TTY/TEXTNET) 866 704 2340  
(FAX) 608 267 8671

**DATE:** September 3, 2008

**TO:** Urban Design Commission

**FROM:** Mayor David J. Cieslewicz

**SUBJECT:** Amended Villager Master Plan

I strongly support the Villager Master Plan that will be presented to you this afternoon and strongly urge your support.

The Villager anchors south end of Park Street and is a cornerstone to the revitalization of Madison's South Side. The purchase of the property in 2004 by the City/CDA brings the promise of further revitalization to a neighborhood that presents one of the most important development opportunities in our city.

The City/CDA undertook the project to keep the health care, education, and service organizations that are the backbone of the Villager together. Retaining the current offering of services while expanding the tenant mix is critical to the success of this project and to the stability of the community.

The adopted master plan presented a compelling vision for the Villager. However, that vision was based on the assumption that the Atrium would be demolished over time. As we began to refine the project with existing and prospective tenants, it became apparent that replacing all of the Villager -- even over the long-term -- was economically infeasible. New space was simply not possible for many of the tenants we are striving to retain, and the loss of tenant revenue resulted in a project cost that was not realistic. Retention of large portions of the existing building also meant there wasn't sufficient parking for all the desired uses identified by the master plan.

As a result, the master plan has undergone some major revisions. Fortunately, the surrounding community has seen the design at community meetings and has responded very favorably to the direction the design is taking.

There are many reasons why the new master plan deserves your support:

- The three new planned buildings will provide a strong urban edge to the site that has been lacking for decades. The location of the buildings will create a campus-like setting that is critical to the interactions among agencies.
- We will significantly improve parking layout, landscaping, and safe pedestrian/bicycle linkages through the site. I have also asked staff to explore an aggressive TDM plan for the Villager.

- The layout and orientation of the buildings facilitates the kind of collaboration among the tenant organizations that was the motivation behind the purchase of the property. One of the most critical aspects of good design is that it supports the purpose of the development.

I realize that this master plan is different than the type of private development plans typically reviewed by the Committee. That's because it is extremely rare for the City/CDA to serve as the developer of a project. I also understand the desire to treat the City/CDA the same as any other developer. However, the City/CDA is very unlike any other developer in that it's motive is public benefit rather than profit. In fact, rather than realizing any profit, the City is investing \$19 million into the project.

There is also a major difference in our relationship with our existing and prospective tenants. Again, rather than the type of arms-length transactions normally seen in redevelopment of this type, we are actually subsidizing several of our tenants. And we need to develop the site in phases to give some of our anchor tenants the time to bring their redevelopment plans to fruition.

We have taken the concerns of committee members to heart and have significantly redesigned the plan to incorporate some of the suggested changes. In the end, the vision of our work at the Villager is to create a vibrant, multi-faceted center for the Park Street community that contributes to revitalization of the neighborhood, succeeds financially, and is positioned well for the opportunities of the future.

Thank you for your consideration.