



Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development

Economic Development Division

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Office of Business Resources

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To: Economic Development Committee

From: Matthew Mikolajewski, Office of Business Resources Manager

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Subject: University Avenue Corridor Plan (Legistar # 32635)

Economic Development Committee (EDC) staff recommend that the EDC approve and forward a recommendation of adoption of the University Avenue Corridor Plan to the Common Council. Unlike many arterial corridors throughout the City of Madison, this segment of University Avenue maintains a largely residential character, with commercial and institutional uses at a handful of locations. Existing buildings are generally modest in height and scale. This plan provides for the opportunity for redevelopment and investment while respecting the use, height, and scale of the existing neighborhood. As such, EDC staff is comfortable providing a recommendation of support.

There is; however, one area of some concern. The plan notes repeatedly a desire for “neighborhood-oriented businesses.” The business surveys completed by Office of Business Resources staff note that many patrons of existing businesses do not live within the neighborhood. The proposed plan recommendations suggest that there will not be a significant increase in the number of new housing units within the neighborhood, reducing the chance that there will be a noticeable increase in the number of new customers residing within the neighborhood. Further, changing shopping and dining trends suggest that it is increasingly difficult for a business to thrive off of the patronage of individuals only residing near the business. Although staff agrees that businesses should serve the surrounding neighborhood, the plan should recognize that successful businesses will likely depend on customers driving, busing, and biking into the neighborhood from other locations in the community. Assuming that the neighborhood agrees with of a broader base of business customers, the neighborhood may wish to consider changing or adding some language in this regard to the plan.

One important aspect of attracting a broader base of customers to the neighborhood is appropriate parking and transportation infrastructure. The plan rightfully identifies current deficiencies with regard to parking and transportation, and provides recommendations for addressing these. EDC staff supports these recommendations as a key component of retaining and attracting the vibrant businesses desired by the neighborhood.