



City of Madison
Minutes - Approved
Economic Development Committee
Subcommittee on Downtown Plan

City of Madison
Madison, WI 53703
www.cityofmadison.com

January 10, 2012

5:00 pm

Madison Municipal Building
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Room 300

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm.

Present: Alfred Zimmerman, Julia Stone, Ed Clarke, Alder Mark Clear, Sandra Torkildson

Also attending: Peggy Yessa, Matthew Mikolajewski, Office of Business Resources; Brad Murphy, Bill Fruhling, City Planning Division; Aaron Olver, Economic Development Director; Steve Cover, Director of the Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development; Joseph Boucher, Economic Development Commission member.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Registered speaker, Susan Schmitz, President of Downtown Madison, Inc.(DMI), said all recommendations tie in to Key 2, Economic Engine. DMI is creating a height map and hopes to have it available before January 18th.

Registered Speaker, Mary Carbine, Business Improvement District (BID) Executive Director, said the BID Subcommittee needed more time to work and may have their recommendations by February. Ms. Carbine distributed her handout of Downtown Market Data Comparisons. She noted Madison's Downtown median income is three times lower than Madison's peer cities' median income. Madison needs more diversity of income in the Downtown area.

Registered speaker, Curt Brink, said the success of the Downtown hinges on the Mifflin area. Today it is a dead zone. Mifflin area has the ability for a higher density than shown in the plan. The population aged 25 + does not live Downtown. West Washington Avenue to State Street is a walkable area. The Mifflin area needs higher density. Recommendation # 66 needs to be changed.

DISCLOSURES AND RECUSALS

Mr. Clarke said he is DMI Board President and has worked in DMI for 2 or 3 years on the Downtown Plan. He has no financial interest in the Downtown.

Ms. Torkildson said she is a Downtown business owner.

BUSINESS

1. Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Alder Clear asked for nominations for Subcommittee Chairperson.

Mr. Clarke nominated Mr. Zimmerman for Chairperson. Mr. Zimmerman accepted the nomination.

The nomination was approved by unanimous consent.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked for nominations for a Vice Chairperson. Ms. Torkildson said she could not be at all the meetings and did not want to be Vice chairperson. Mr. Clarke did not want to be Vice Chairperson.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked Ms. Stone to be Vice Chairperson and she accepted. The nomination was approved by unanimous consent.

DISCUSSION ITEM

2. #24468- A Resolution Adopting the Downtown Plan as a Supplement to the City of Madison Comprehensive Plan

Chairperson Zimmerman said the subcommittee needed to discuss their process of review and establish ground rules of what to review. He asked where the subcommittee would like to begin?

Alder Clear said the goal of this group is to make recommendations to the full EDC for the Plan Commission and the Common Council. These include changes, additions and deletions. Ms. Turkildson said a lot of the plan is OK. The big issues are density and building size and economic and commercial spaces. There was not a lot of discussion about the Lakefront at the last EDC meeting.

Ms. Stone said to use the way the EDC reviewed the Development Process Plan by going through all the recommendations.

Mr. Clarke said to start with the first set of recommendations.

Chairperson Zimmerman said the objective is to have succinct yet comprehensive recommendations.

Alder Clear said Key 2, the Economic Engine seems disconnected from the rest of the plan. He suggested review of Key 2 at the end of the discussion to see how it all ties back to Key 2. Chairperson Zimmerman agreed.

Mr. Clarke asked if Appendix D is the metrics for the plan?

Mr. Murphy said there is a wealth of data throughout the plan.

Mr. Clarke suggested looking at each section, and then its benchmarks.

Chairperson Zimmerman would like to reserve Key 2 and Appendix D to the end of the discussion to link it all together.

Mr. Clarke suggested doing half of the plan now, half of the plan at the next meeting and the benchmarks at the last meeting.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked if everyone was OK with reviewing 1, 3, 4, and 5 today? All subcommittee members were OK with this.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked for any changes to Key 1.

Mr. Clarke referred to page 14 and the sentence regarding the filling in of 1 ¾ acres of Lake Monona. He said this is modest and the park should be maximized by reestablishing the four acres of fill permitted in 1990.

Chairperson Zimmerman's said this would maximize the space and celebrate the lakes. The key element would be an amphitheater or outdoor concert environment. He noted Madison's peer cities have these. It brings people Downtown.

Alder Clear asked about the scale of this? Would it be band shell or something similar to the Marcus Amphitheater or Millennium Park?

Chairperson Zimmerman said it could be a large outdoor concert venue of open space, not necessarily seating. It could be tiered land with space at both ends for removable stages.

Mr. Fruhling said the Committee on the Environment had no specific concerns but more of a principal of not filling the Lake.

Mr. Clarke asked about filling any of it?

Mr. Fruhling said they opposed any hard fill of the lake shore.

Mr. Clarke supports the filling and said the City did get permission in the past to fill in the lake.

Ms. Stone asked if the environmental regulations had been changed since the previous permission was granted?

Ms. Torkildson noted the John Nolen Drive Plan called for underground streets and other options that did not fill in the Lake.

Alder Clear said the scale of this recommendation would cause robust public process. Our role is to look at broad recommendations.

Mr. Clarke said lake access was the number one recommendation at meetings, it has support.

Ms. Torkildson noted further in the report it says Downtown parkland is limited and the Lake is a Downtown park, an area to experience the outdoors.

Chairperson Zimmerman said there are examples around the country of lakefront venues, such as in Austin at Town Lake/Lady Bird Park.

Mr. Clarke asked if these spaces allow private sector restaurants?

Mr. Murphy said the functions of the buildings are not identified, probably not for use as a boathouse but might allow for other private sector uses.

Alder Clear commented on the connections to the proposed land bridges. Do these change the use of Wilson Street?

Mr. Fruhling said the plan calls for the entertainment district on Wilson Street to be enhanced. The bridge closest to Monona Terrace connects Law Park to the core of the Downtown.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked about the uses of the properties next to the bridges?

Alder Clear said that is already in the plan. He asked if the subcommittee wanted to make one motion on each Key or at the end?

Ms Stone said she did not join in the consensus of filling in Lake Monona. What is the size of the Lake and the percentage being filled in?

Mr. Murphy said it is less than 1% of the Lake Monona area.

Ms. Stone asked what are we adding?

Chairperson Zimmerman said we are adding green space for events and performances, space for fairs, booths and concerts.

Ms. Torkildson said this is a long term plan, a vision of future demand for space. People from other parts of the City come to the Downtown. Lakefronts in other cities generate income.

Ms. Stone said Seattle filled in Elliot Bay for a shipping terminal. If there is no parking why come Downtown?

Mr. Clarke said he thinks about when Central Park was first developed in New York City and the people thought it was too large. This is lake access space.

Alder Clear asked if adding "performance venue" to the text be agreed upon?

Mr. Clarke suggested removing the reference to "1 ¼ acres of fill" on page 14.

A motion was made by Mr. Clarke, seconded by Ms. Stone to recommend to strike the “adding approximately 1 ¾ acre of fill” text from page 14 and insert “flexible performance venue that naturally blends in with the environment”.

The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked for comments on the Lake Mendota recommendations. On page 18, could any segment be designated for restaurants?

Mr. Murphy said there are probably opportunities for commercial areas. Segment 2 is the National Guardian Life property which is already commercial use.

Chairperson Zimmerman suggested at least one area for outdoor eating.

Alder Clear said segment 2 is already commercial.

Mr. Olver suggested the houses for sale in James Madison Park that could be used for commercial purposes.

Ms. Torkildson said we should encourage restaurant development in all the segments.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked for a motion.

Mr. Clarke said a plan can encourage restaurant development. In recommendation 3 we could add “and encourage lake front dining”.

Chairperson Zimmerman suggested adding “encourage lakefront boat docking”.

Alder Clear noted this is already in recommendation # 4.

A motion was made by Mr. Clarke and seconded by Alder Clear to modify Recommendation #3 with the addition of “and encourage lakefront dining.”

The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked to discuss Key 3 on page 35. He asked for the history of the state law that deals with the height limitations.

Mr. Murphy explained the City adopted the height restriction in 1966 and the State statute was created in 1986 which caps building heights at 187.2 feet above the lake level for a distance of 1 mile from the Capitol building.

Chairperson Zimmerman would like to designate one area of the downtown to have a higher height restriction and to challenge the State law. He would like to create a financial district in the downtown to house corporate headquarters. This would allow for taller buildings with impressive views.

Mr. Clarke asked how far out is the one mile radius?

Mr. Murphy said it is approximately out to the 800 block of E. Washington Avenue.

Chairperson Zimmerman said most people have a 15 minute walk limit. To bring people with higher incomes to live and work Downtown Madison needs higher density in walking distance.

Mr. Clarke thinks Madison is not big enough for a financial district. Madison needs more density and to protect the views.

Ms. Stone questioned why are we ignoring East Washington Avenue only three blocks away? Portland has a 20 minute walk plan.

Mr. Murphy said the City already has an adopted plan for the East Washington Capitol Gateway area. There is also an East Rail Corridor Plan.

Ms. Stone asked to look at the bigger picture, three blocks is not far.

Alder Clear said the buildings on East Washington can go higher. If Madison were to have a financial district it could be in a midtown area such as at Hill Farms. This area could be redeveloped as a second downtown.

Ms. Stone asked what is our goal?

Chairperson Zimmerman wants to open up the Downtown for a major employer in a corporate headquarters environment. He gave the example of Exxon relocating its headquarters to Los Colinas outside of Dallas. We have the space if we build vertically.

Ms Stone agrees but the entire City of Madison needs to be looked at. There might be non-downtown areas for this.

Alder Clear said American Family and Alliant Energy were located Downtown and moved to the American Center. The E. Washington Ave. area could accommodate large companies.

Ms. Stone said the parking required takes a lot of space. Her business moved out of the Downtown because of the cost of parking.

Ms. Torkildson said if people live and work Downtown they can use transportation if busses would run every 10 minutes instead of 30 minutes. We need to think corporate headquarters and housing for people in the Downtown.

Mr. Clarke referred to the THRIVE demographic data from Austin, Des Moines and Lincoln. Madison has the lowest percentage of the population in the 25-34 age group of all these cities.

Ms. Stone asked what are we hoping to do with Key 3?

Mr. Clarke said this is technical. He said DMI is producing a height map. Key 3 deals with the retail sector as well. Could we wait to see DMI's documents?

Alder Clear had two thoughts:

1. Somewhere around 1/3 to 1/2 of the Downtown Plan area is low density residential.
2. The tobacco warehouse area in the SW corner of the Downtown has potential for higher density use of land.

Chairperson Zimmerman said the tobacco warehouse area could be a more enhanced entrance to the City. He asked to look at recommendations # 35 & 36.

Ms. Stone asked if staff could recommend areas for this development? If East Washington develops would this create an imbalance? She would like an idea of where a 20-story building could go.

Ms. Torkildson said a wide street like W. Washington Ave. could support higher buildings and the plan does not call for much more than is currently there. This is the only place with a wide street. Mifflin could support higher density also.

Mr. Cover noted there are two options to consider for this area.

Mr. Fruhling referred to the letter of transmittal in the Downtown plan which contains the second Mifflin option.

Chairperson Zimmerman said from the economic development standpoint the Downtown needs a segment that allows for large corporate or residential buildings. Key 3 limits the quantity of life and work space.

Alder Clear asked about the 4-5 story height limits on W. Washington Ave.?

Mr. Fruhling said the Mifflin area had a lot of discussion in the earlier meetings. There were 8 alternatives presented to the Plan Commission. The plan in the draft has a net of 750-800 new residential units. The existing Bassett Neighborhood Plan recommends 4-story buildings on W. Washington Ave..

Mr. Murphy said the Mifflin alternative in the transmittal letter recommends up to 6 stories on West Washington Ave. The predominate land use along W. Washington Ave. is residential.

Alder Clear asked if a 20-story office building is recommended on W. Washington Ave. would it be opposed?

Mr. Murphy said there is strong support for what is in the Downtown Plan.

Ms. Stone asked what does the neighborhood say on this?

Mr. Murphy says the residents like what is in the plan.

Ms. Stone asked for a feasibility study of a financial district.

Mr. Cover said the Downtown Plan should be reviewed based on what we think not on what is politically approvable.

Chairperson Zimmerman asked where in the Downtown could a large development that brings in new employment be located?

Alder Clear said he is warming to the idea of thinking big for a Downtown development.

Mr. Clarke said the Smartgrowth Report recommends no height options in recommendation # 44 and to allow for PUDs.

Alder Clear said PUDs are a safety valve for projects with extraordinary merit.

Mr. Clarke asked if this is a way of getting around zoning. Does this violate a plan?

Mr. Murphy said this does not violate any rule of planning. City policy-makers can change a plan. Zoning can be amended.

Mr. Clarke asked if the heights in recommendation #44 are guidelines instead of zoning?

Mr. Murphy said this is one that needs to be changed.

Chairperson Zimmerman said it is 7:00 pm and he would like to come to a conclusion.

Alder Clear doesn't want to rush through Key 3 tonight, could we take it up at the next meeting?

Mr. Clarke agreed.

Ms. Torkildson announced she cannot attend the next meeting.

Alder Clear is has three concerns:

1. Height limits
2. Where is there space downtown for significant new development?
3. How can new development fit in the skyline and not be lopsided?

Ms. Stone asked if there was any consensus on the Mifflin area? Building height are important and need flexibility. For an environmental standpoint if development does not occur Downtown then where? What is the vision for the future? Cities with density will have the leg up.

Mr. Murphy explained zoning districts regulate the building height and mass that can be built. If height is not considered in zoning then how can it be accommodated?

Chairperson Zimmerman agreed zoning can control height but a safety valve is needed.

Mr. Clarke refereed to page 43 and the streetscape recommendations.

Mr. Fruhling said if terraces are wide and have large street trees no boulevards are needed in the center of the street.

Alder Clear agreed this works for Wisconsin Avenue but not for W. Washington Ave..

Mr. Fruhling said the plan calls for striping W. Washington Ave. with one lane in each direction and bike lanes.

Mr. Cover said a transportation plan is underway.

Chairperson Zimmerman referred to Key 3, recommendations # 45 & 46. He said the plan needs temperance for corner lots. Is there anything else in Key 3?

Alder Clear asked about the undergrounding of utilities in the Bassett area?

Mr. Murphy said above ground utilities exist in the Downtown.

Mr. Clarke asked who pays for undergrounding?

Mr. Murphy said it depends; sometimes the City does and sometimes it is the utility company or by special assessments to property owners.

Ms. Stone asked if this is an urban forest issue? What is our homework?

Chairperson Zimmerman said:

- Review Recommendations 37-43 – Any changes?
- Review Recommendation # 44 -
 - What extraordinary circumstances would allow a “good” project to be approved that does not fit in the zoning district?
 - What area of the Downtown would be appropriate for large scale buildings such as corporate headquarters?
 - Think about maintaining the height restriction in the zoning code.
- Review Recommendation # 45 - Come up with language to temper it to allow for buildings on odd shaped lots.
- Review Recommendation # 46 -What conditions would allow for flexibility of a prudent use of stepbacks?
- Review Keys 4 & 5 - Review the recommendations listed in 4 & 5 and bring a prepared list of possible changes or additions to recommendations.
- Review Keys 6-9 - Review the recommendations listed in 6 - 9 and bring a prepared list of possible changes or additions to recommendations.

Alder Clear is concerned about the predominance of residential uses in the plan.

Mr. Clarke asked why the plan looks backward at “building on the strong student history” in the Mifflin area?

Chairperson Zimmerman asked Ms. Torkildson to write up her comments for the next meeting.

Ms. Torkildson said to be careful about design guidelines that keep things the same. Look at Recommendation # 59. Historic buildings had different uses and need to allow for new uses. Sometimes only the facades can be saved. Businesses have different needs and sizes now than in the past that don't always fit in these buildings.

Mr. Clarke asked about the definition of historic buildings and landmarks?

Mr. Murphy said anything older than 50 years could be historic.

Alder Clear asked how much of the plan is being held back by liking the way things are now?

Ms. Stone asked what can we narrow down yet tonight? Other committees are not done yet, why are we rushing this?

Mr. Murphy said only 4 committees have finished their review and others have multiple meetings scheduled before February.

Chairperson Zimmerman prefers the EDC go first to get our information to others to consider.

ADJOURNMENT

Alder Clear made a motion, seconded by Ms. Stone to adjourn the meeting.

The motion passed by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:21 PM.