

From: Michael D. Barrett [<mailto:mikeb@urbanthoreau.com>]
Sent: Monday, November 21, 2011 3:24 PM
To: Hoffman, Jeanne
Subject: Downtown Plan Comment for SDEC

Dear Commissioners,
I have read the plan in great detail; below are my comments. Thank you for considering them.

Sincerely,
Michael D. Barrett
2137 Sommers Avenue
Madison, WI 53704

Please,

*No fill of any body of water, at all, anywhere. None. If planners feel the need to expand Law Park, that would be fine, as long as the expansion is away from the water. Depaving half of John Nolen Drive for a wider strip of park would be most welcome. Traffic--current & projected--can be accommodated with a combination of efficient intersection engineering (roundabouts, etc.) and reversible commuter lanes.

No accommodation of motorized transportation along lakeshore. Parks should be places of relaxation, not speed & fumes. The ski teams create a lot of havoc across the bike/ped path making life difficult for non-motorized transportation. That must end.

100% on-site stormwater management for all new buildings. That means green roofs, on-site water collection (rooftop rain barrels & water towers/reservoirs, raingardens, drainage swales, structured soils, etc).

Zero net energy buildings for all new buildings. The technology is there for hyper-efficient "passiv" buildings. Let's do it.

No tear downs, no matter how old or what condition; we can't afford to waste the embedded energy in our classical structures.

Parking must be managed to de-emphasize the automobile downtown. Begin by monetizing parking. Decouple residential and commercial leases from parking. That is, charge separately for parking.

On p 24. Recommendation 12: How can parking be a "recognized constraint" when there is plenty of parking according to the city's parking coordinator, Bill Knobloch?

On p. 27, rec 20: I think I know what they mean, but the sentence is mangled.

Is this the page where green roofs should be discussed? If so, recommend all roofs in the entirety of downtown are GREEN.

All buildings EnergyStar & LEED Platinum, net zero energy.

On p. 28 . 2nd sentence missing something at end.

p 31, rec 27. why more parking? unless they mean metering on-street more, which could effectively create more. Metering on-street, good.

p. 32, Why the focus on drive time? Does this mean that the greenbacks of bus riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians have no value?

Add downtown urban bike experience promotion, highlighting Madison as the Upper Midwestern hub of human powered transportation and silent sports. Nota bene: Trek Corp has already recognized this in their purchase of the Mansion Hill Inn and extensive investment in B-Cycle.

p. 34, "improved transportation and destination accessibility" invariably means bigger roads and more parking, both of which militate against the stated ideas (in the same sentence) of, "environmental stewardship... increased lake and lakefront activity, increased emphasis on outdoor recreation, strong cultural tourism, creation of distinctive visitor districts..."

Note also that the UW Memorial Union has the highest draw of any other attraction in Madison, and yet, *and yet*, it has virtually no parking available. What little parking is nearby is minimal in relation to the scale of its attendance. Little parking, high attractiveness...coincidence? Me thinks not.

p. 39, rec 42. Look to Ann Arbor's Main Street for better building-street interactivity. Too many of our downtown streets choke pedestrian traffic while over-providing for the automobile. That needs to be reversed with lots of bulb-outs at crosswalks, and for an enhanced cafe experience, as well as for more greenspace.

p. 45, Urban Forest: All new street reconstruct projects must use maximum on-site stormwater management that maximizes street tree health. Structured soils across large areas under sidewalk & streets, designed to collect and infiltrate stormwater for street tree health, must be standard. [See Anne Walker for further technical details.]

p. 51, Mifflin: I am against all tear downs. There is a lot of embedded energy in these classic old houses. Boost building code enforcement to end the deterioration. Use micro-TIF to promote rehab of existing buildings.

I am against the "urban lane" thing; it is just a fancy term for ugly parking garage entrance. I guarantee that the traffic engineer will allow no "lane" scaled anything. It will be required to be to full fire-engine accessible widths (i.e., very wide) and turning radii. This means, pedestrian unfriendly. Please, if people want to live downtown, they live with fewer/no cars. The backyards should be returned to green.

General Comment:

The term "infill" has gotten severely bastardized. It used to mean exactly that: take an empty space and put something in it. Now, they've expanded it to mean tear down something cool (i.e., something old), and replace it with something new, ugly, more dense. They've usurped the goodwill that word used to have. I am against all infill that involves tearing down old buildings, no matter what shape they are in. As someone who has invested a lot of my personal resources into three 100-year old buildings, I believe that we've got to stop subsidizing these scumlords who are essentially strip mining their buildings by not keeping them up. Along those lines....

p. 59, recs 86-89 are awful. It is all about tearing down entire neighborhoods and plunking down Fitchburg. Hideous.

p. 71. Why is this being presented from the perspective of the well-wheeled suburbanite? Why not highlight the fact that of residents who *live* in the downtown area from Blair to Highland, 65% get to work by means other than driving alone?

p. 72, "An efficient network of arterial, collector and local streets"? Sounds like fast streets. Something that militates against walking, biking, and most especially, old people and children; people the plan claimed it wanted in the last chapter. Worst of all, it militates against our ENVIRONMENT.

In fact, this plan does nothing to rein in the vast and excessive expanses of paving at key intersections and gateways to downtown. The John Nolen/Blair/E. Wilson intersection is way over-built for current and projected traffic. It is extremely dangerous for pedestrians & bicycles. Same for the major intersections the entire length of Broom from John Nolen to W. Gorham. Flying right/left turn lanes are always inappropriate in an urban environment. These and other giant intersections militate against the plan's pretensions to be elderly & child friendly, much less bike & ped friendly. And by promoting cars, it damages our air, promotes more water-destructive paving.

and,

"On street, structured, and underground parking facilities to meet anticipated needs, and eventual redevelopment of large surface parking lots. "

...More? Really? Why not promote downtown as the preferred place to live the car-free life?

p. 74, Transit,

" Park and ride lots strategically located throughout the region": P& R lots are an extreme waste of money; failed planning relics of the 1970s energy crisis that just won't go away. The money would be much better used to boost actual transit service.

p. 75, Bus Transit: As a growing city, and as a major medical center, Madison is increasingly a 24 hour city. As such, we need 24 hour bus service. A Skeletal system would be appropriate for late night hours, but at least that needs to get going.

78-79 Complete Streets: 2-way streets are the only kind of streets that are compatible with a truly urban environment.

p. 80 Parking: "There is, however, at least the perception that there continues to be a lack of sufficient parking for short term users and commuters in certain areas. "

...Why do the planners feel the need to repeat this old canard? Aside from Gov't East, there is no ramp that fills up during regular business hours. None. If you want to fix the "perception" why not just use the technology currently available to you and actually post a real time number, visible to the street, available on the 'net, showing the number of spaces available in each lot? Enough with the voodoo parking analysis.

p. 83 rec 142 B-Cycle: This is not the only bicycle sharing/rental arrangement available downtown. I don't think it is appropriate to promote one private company over another. It would be more appropriate to keep it generic and say "promote and expand bike sharing, bike lending and bike rental programs in the downtown area." [Budget Bikes, Yellow Jersey and Machinery Row all rent bikes, and Budget has a bike lending program. Point being, Trek Bicycles' B-Cycle should not be giving preferential positioning in this public document. Indeed, it appears to be the only private enterprise given mention in this document.]

p. 85-6 Langdon Mid-block Path. Why are there cars on this "path?" By giving it this name but putting cars on it is a bait-and-switch. Why not just call it what it is, a parking expansion zone? I mean, really, do you think the testosterone buzzed frat boys will be able to resist running all those strollers off the road? Really? Please....

p. 89 TDM: "subsidies for transit riders," should include subsidies for biking, walking as well.

The plan has a very long way to go. Please do not approve it.