



Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID)

October 1, 2009

TO: City of Madison Plan Commission

Cc: Kevin Briski, Parks Superintendent
Mark Olinger, Director, Planning & Economic & Community Development

FROM: Board of Directors, Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID)

The Board of Directors of Madison's Central Business Improvement District (BID) supports the Peace Park reconstruction and the proposed Visitor Center plans.

The Board represents commercial property and business owners in the greater State Street and Capitol Square area, and helps to promote the downtown to resident and visitors through the Downtown Map & Guide, visitdowntownmadison.com website, and Downtown Information Ambassador Program. A number of Board members own properties and businesses in the 400 block of State Street, immediately adjacent to Peace Park. Many BID members experience Peace Park on a daily basis, and are extremely familiar with the park, its history, and current activities. In addition, the Board formed a Peace Park Subcommittee, which reviewed and gave input to the plans, and helped define the BID role as a partner in the Visitor Center operations.

The BID supports the planned park redesign and Visitor Center with public bathrooms, police office, and ATM as a positive addition to the environment downtown, where all people are welcome, and where public spaces need to be safe and available to be enjoyed by all.

The Peace Park plan is a holistic concept for a successful urban park that was developed out of two years of inclusive work by a citizen committee (the Lisa Link Peace Park Advisory Committee, whose report and concept plan was approved by the Common Council in April, 2004). The planned Visitor Center in Peace Park is a public-private partnership, in which city and private resources are maximized to provide high quality public spaces and services.

The BID has stepped forward to partner with the Parks Department and has committed to staffing the Visitor Center year-round with our Downtown Information Ambassadors.

Operating from seasonal booths, Ambassadors currently help more than 28,000 people per year with maps and downtown directions. We look forward to helping even more people from a much-needed, year-round Visitor Center. Downtown Madison is a destination for millions of visitors each year. Each year, more than 3 million people visit just the "top ten" downtown events and destinations (such as Overture Center, the State Capitol, Art Fair on the Square). Another 7 million visit the University of Wisconsin annually—trips which often involve stopping on State Street. According to the 2007 Downtown Madison Market Analysis Study, visitors

spend an estimated \$70 million annually on downtown shopping and dining, making a vital contribution to our local economy.

The BID supports the proposed ATM as appropriate for a Visitor Center in the middle of a retail district, and as a way to make the Center "full service stop." The proposed surcharge-free ATM is also a potential source of revenue that could help fund visitor center operations (without any additional city dollars spent), so that the center and public bathrooms are kept clean and open longer hours.

The BID is also a partner in the Downtown Reachout Program, and supports connecting those in need with housing and services as the best approach for the street population in the Peace Park area. ReachOut staff work with people on the street to reduce disruptive behavior and connect those in need with treatment, counseling and housing. The BID supports the education aspect of the program, helping to fund materials about where those in need can get help, how to donate to organizations which serve those in need, and about the impacts of panhandling. ReachOut resource guides are available via BID Ambassadors and at downtown businesses. For more information, see <http://www.madisonreachout.org>.

The BID Board wholeheartedly supports the Peace Park plans, and looks forward to partnering with City of Madison Parks on a successful Visitor Center.

On behalf of the BID Board,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Carbine". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long vertical stroke at the end.

Mary Carbine
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cc: Board of Directors, Madison's Central BID